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ENGLISH AND THE ENGLISH SPIRIT*

By HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR, LORD WAKEHURST,
Patron-in-Chief of the Australian English Association, Sydney

After the last war, the British Board of Education appointed a Committee on the Teaching of English, whose report (published in 1921) I looked up when I was preparing this address. It is still well worth study. Among the sayings of distinguished persons quoted in support of English studies is one by Robert Lowe, Viscount Sherbrooke, who had the unusual distinction of being a Legislative Councillor of New South Wales as well as a British Chancellor of the Exchequer. "During the last two years that I was at school", wrote Lord Sherbrooke in his Memoir, "I was, if not actually idle, at least not wholly devoted to Latin and Greek. But there was a certain book-case in the corner of the study which was full of standard and sterling English books; I spent my time in reading those English books, and I can only say that I owe my success in life to those stolen hours. They gave me the power of being able to write and speak my native language with some precision and force, a power which has been more valuable to me than all the rest I have learned."

Leaving aside for the moment any implied slur on the classics, a subject to which I shall presently revert, I think everyone would support Lord Sherbrooke's testimony to the value of reading good English. In a democracy, which depends so much on the formation of public opinion by discussion, an understanding of language is of special importance. Clearness, ease, and accuracy of expression are not a substitute for thought, but without them much good thought may be wasted. One might almost go so far as to say that the essence of all liberal education is the study of great literature. This was one of the great discoveries of the Renaissance. But at the time of the Renaissance, Greek and Latin were the only great literatures available. None of the modern European languages, except perhaps Italian, had got beyond the stage of being "vulgar tongues", to use the phrase of the Book of Common Prayer. English had only recently vindicated its claim to be the national language. It was not the official language of Parliament until 1362. French was used at the English Court until the Wars of the Roses. Latin long held the field as the international language in diplomacy, law, science, and medicine. Chaucer, who died in 1400, is generally accepted as the father of English literature, but it was the translation of the Bible into English and the influence of the

* An address given at the Twenty-first Anniversary Dinner of the Australian English Association on November 23, 1944.

English Bible during the Reformation period that made the language whose literature we must absorb today if we want to be masters of our native tongue.

English, in fact, is a very modern language. We must not, therefore, be surprised that the idea of its taking the place of Latin and Greek in formal education should date only from yesterday. Moreover, it must be remembered that education is a process of discipline as well as of development, and that Latin and Greek have powerful claims to superiority over English as vehicles of mental discipline. It is mainly because of the exaggeration of this formal, disciplinary side of the teaching of the classics, the emphasis on grammar, parsing, prosody, and so on, that the classics have become unpopular. When education became compulsory and universal, and was extended to the mass of the population, which had not inherited the classical tradition, English came into its own because it was the only possible medium of instruction. But unfortunately, instead of using English as it was originally intended that Greek and Latin should be used, as a demonstration of the best that had been thought, expressed in the best possible way, our educationalists tried to force the teaching of English into the mould which had already squeezed most of the life out of the classics.

To over-formalize the teaching of the classics is bad, but to apply similar methods to the teaching of English is much worse, for, if it be true, as I believe, that the English language enshrines the English spirit, then by trying to force English into a strait-jacket you will be doing violence to something essentially mobile and flexible.

There was an old dilemma of the schools about the teaching of virtue,* a dilemma which arose largely because virtue is unseizable, an influence permeating and proceeding from the whole man, an atmosphere. The quality of the English spirit is similar. It appears notably in the simplicity which is characteristic of traditional poetry. There is, for instance, the charming carol which has this refrain:

The rising of the sun
And the running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the choir.

Those lines have a native and congenial sweetness. But how explain the constituents of that sweetness, the rhymes that now are no rhymes ("sun" with "organ", "deer" with "choir"), the ebb and flow of rhythm, the incoherencies of thought of this anonymous English masterpiece?

* What immediately follows is largely derived from an article entitled "The English Secret" in the *Times Literary Supplement* of Sept. 28th, 1922.

To appreciate English we must first experience the English spirit as it lives in English letters, or English music, or English life. How much easier that would be if teachers were as unsophisticated as their pupils! But teachers, alas! must be educated—and they must educate; and English has none of the qualities that recommend a language for general educational purposes. How different, for instance, is French! Every Frenchman is a stylist: the veriest peasant discriminates between accuracy and inaccuracy in the use of words. The corresponding Englishman is unaware of the existence of any model. He reads the Bible, he also reads the nearest newspaper, and he is capable of putting as high a value on the writings of the prophets of Fleet Street as on those of the prophet Isaiah.

The point is vital, and needs wider consideration. The English spirit is distinguished by its power to preserve under severe stress of circumstance qualities which other races have one after another sacrificed to the attainment of some specialized ability or function. The normal tendency of the mind, under the impact of experience, is to submit its faculties to division, to form them for specific uses, as it were limbs. Now, our physical limbs commit us to certain modes of action. Having them in one kind we cannot have them in another. The birds when they took to flying sacrificed the use of fingers and hands for ever. To limit the responsiveness of the mind, even when that responsiveness is made more acute in certain directions, is dangerous for the development of the mind as a whole. The lesson which the mind has the greatest difficulty in learning is that all specialization of its powers must be conducted under a reserve, and that its life is its faculty to remain whole before a world that is whole. This is a lesson which French thought has never learnt. Let me take as an example this sentence written by M. René Doumic, summarizing the merits of Louis XIV and his time: "Il a humilié la nature devant la raison, en qui réside toute la noblesse de l'homme." The weak spot in the French intellectual armour could not be better indicated. No doubt, reason may more nearly claim to represent the wholeness of the mind than any other faculty. But it is not, and never can be, the whole; least of all when it looks for its triumphs in the humiliation of Nature! The French, then, with all the high specialization and pride of their intellectual consciousness, have divided the mind, and, in dividing, limited it. The English, without knowing what they were about, have in a singular degree preserved it whole. Our usual name for this wholeness is simply common sense. Respecting Nature instead of "humiliating" her, watching facts as they are instead of demonstrating what logic says they shall be, we have built up all those astonishing

combinations of the theoretically senseless and the practically sound, including our Constitution and our Empire, which everywhere go by the name of English. In truth, this quality of the English mind, which we call common, has nothing common about it at all; it is rare and it is priceless. We shall need all the common sense we can muster for the task of guiding the spirit of man through the new phases of his development. If the British peoples are able to make a decisive contribution it will not be only because of our armed strength, or our wealth—in these we can easily be outdone—but because deep-rooted experience has matured, without specializing, our power of vision.

It is time, then, that we should reflect seriously upon the nature and implications of this remarkable gift, that we may do nothing to weaken or undermine it. In framing a policy of education, above all, we must go warily; for a chief part of the educational process is the replacement of unconscious by conscious action of the mind, and, broadly speaking, this great English virtue of common sense is a virtue of unconsciousness. The English mind, as we have seen, has a native affinity for unanalysed adjustments and reactions. In defiance of the demands of consistency, it clings to its intuition of the relevant fact; disregarding intellectual processes, it relies on an apprehension of what is vital to the work in hand. There is only one way of learning the secret of this extraordinary process: it is to learn everything else.

Now, our literature reflects in an unusual degree the components of our civilization. If we want to get to know our English world we must learn something of the worlds that have made it, above all the Greek and Roman worlds. Lord Baldwin once said that what he gained from a classical education was an increased sense of proportion, a higher standard of values, and a more profound respect for the truth of words, in fact an intensification and sharpening of critical faculties which is hard to win by the study of English alone.

The peculiar advantages of Latin and Greek as mental training are derived, I think, from the fact that their relation to the world of today is both fundamental and organic. French, or any other modern language, for instance, has a much more organic than fundamental relation to the world of today. Among dead languages, Sanskrit, for instance, may be fundamental to all the Aryan languages, but nothing that was written in Sanskrit could have the same living meaning as the classics. I believe that much of the student's distaste for the tedious and toilsome process of classical studies would be removed if, before being made to tackle the form, he could be presented with a picture of the content that would stimulate his interest and curiosity.

The debt we owe to the civilization of Greece and Rome is perhaps not so easy to realize in Australia as it is in Europe, where its evidences are still to be seen on every hand. It is nevertheless an indisputable fact that the civilization of which we English-speaking peoples boast today is largely grounded upon the achievements of the ancients. "Our ideas of law, citizenship, freedom and Empire, our poetry and prose literature; our political, metaphysical, aesthetic, and moral philosophy, indeed our organized rational pursuit of truth in all its non-experimental branches as well as a large and vital part of the religion that has won to itself much of the civilized world, are rooted in Greek and Roman thought."* We cannot forget that Britain was a Roman province for over three hundred years—double the period that Australia has been British. To be ignorant of the history of that Empire is to be without that sense of perspective which is essential to see our national life as a whole.

Why did the Roman Empire come into existence and why did it perish? These are questions the answers to which surely contain lessons for ourselves, another imperial race. May we not profit by study of the Roman character, which accepted as a matter of course the dedication of the highest gifts to the public service? May we not learn something from Roman methods of administration, which were successful for so long in holding together peoples differing widely in race, language and culture?

We have also the advantage of knowing the end of the story. When we recognize, in our own time, tendencies which manifested themselves during the period of the decline and fall of Rome, we may become more alert to avoid similar pitfalls. For instance, we hear complaints during the later centuries of Roman history about the disproportionate growth of the cities, about the exhaustion of the permanent sources of wealth, about the increase of luxury and the decline of the homely virtues of thrift and simplicity. We are told of outcries against the burden of armaments and taxation. We learn of the growing complexity and rigidity of administration. A gradual atrophy of intellectual energy and public spirit spread over the body politic until the instinct of self-government was lost. Rome has left danger signals along the road; it is for us to read them.

And then we may turn to another history, which from the political point of view is largely one of failure. Our conceptions of political freedom and of a self-governing democracy originated in Greece. But

* *Report of the Committee on the Position of the Classics in the Educational System of the United Kingdom (1921)*, to which I am much indebted for the argument of the next few paragraphs.

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although the Greeks tried every kind of experiment to gain organic unity, they were defeated by those very characteristics of intellect and temperament which raised them to such heights in poetry, art and philosophy. Had Greece succeeded in what she attempted, the result might have been much more like a Commonwealth of Nations than an Empire on the Roman model. May not her failure warn us of the danger that local and sectional points of view, if pressed too far, may divide communities of the same blood and speech just because their close relationship makes quarrelling so easy?

Thus, we are able, through the classics, to study a civilization in which many of the fundamental problems were the same as our own, but presented themselves in vastly simpler forms, or on a much smaller scale. Our powers of criticism are not deadened by custom or distorted by prejudice. We may not actually be acquiring information about the problems of modern life, but we can gain a certain power of understanding and of judgment in fundamentals which is harder to get than information and quite as valuable.

So far it may be said that I have not been discussing classical studies in the accepted sense. It is indeed true that it is not essential to be a Greek or Latin scholar to learn important lessons from ancient history. Apart, then, from the fact that translations can never be altogether substitutes for originals, why bother about the form if the content can be otherwise assimilated? One answer is that classical studies can be of great practical value in helping us to master our own language. That they are the key to the inner meaning of much of our vocabulary is obvious, but there is more than this. They are the key to our own best literary productions. We cannot but be impressed by the clarity and conciseness of the best Greek and Latin authors. Moreover, they did not over-elaborate their thought, being content to leave something to the mental processes of their readers. How different from some of our own writers who seem so eager to leave nothing unsaid that no germ remains undeveloped to which the reader's own mind might give increase! Again, take the case of the journalistic writings which are among the most rapidly produced. Lucidity, if it is to exist at all, must be spontaneous and instinctive. In rapid writing it is only the scholar's instinct which will light unhesitatingly on the right word and secure general precision of statement and orderly sequence of thought. In rapid reading also, it is the scholar's instinct which detects most surely the presence or absence of these qualities. It is noteworthy that the defects in the use of language which are most conspicuous in modern writings are precisely those in which modern languages contrast most sharply with Latin and Greek of the best period, and it is

by reference to that standard that they can best be detected. The acceptance of this standard is of particular importance in the case of English, because we have let our language grow up against a background of traditional classical scholarship without attempting to standardize it for ourselves.

After the classics, and here I make amends for some earlier remarks, no study is of greater importance for us than that of the language and literature of France. The territory between the Loire and the Rhine, as Mr. Christopher Dawson has said,* was the homeland of the culture which predominated in Europe all through the Middle Ages and even into modern times. "It was the cradle of Gothic architecture, of the great mediaeval schools, of the movement of monastic and ecclesiastical reform, and of the crusading ideal. It was the centre of the typical development of the feudal state, of the North European communal movement, and of the institution of knighthood." It was here that the barbaric North and the civilized South fused under the spiritual influence of Christian institutions. It was here that was founded the cultural unity, which, in spite of the weakening of its religious foundation, is still discernible. In all these aspects our cultural heritage is wrapped up with French language and literature; and as with the classics we can learn from their forms as well as from their content. The breadth of purpose which distinguishes our literature has involved it in many technical uncertainties; one of the chief dangers attaching to the direct study of English, to English conceived as an instrument rather than as the end of education, is that it provides no safeguard against confusion between that virtue of breadth and that vice of uncertainty. French writers exhibit to us in an eminent degree the beauties of precision. They are exquisite marksmen. It is a delight to observe, as we read, how they pick their target and register one direct hit after another upon it. This is an experience of the greatest value for us.

The conclusion of the whole matter, I think, is this: that we cannot effectively receive the message of the English Spirit, enshrined in English literature, unless we are familiar with the elements it holds in solution, the pitfalls it has avoided, the experiences it has absorbed, and unless, when all these things are analysed and appreciated, we still hold fast to the organic principle of the whole, to its prevailing creative integrity. The Englishman who is to enter perfectly into his inheritance must be a citizen of the world.

If we were in England we might stop here, though even so we should probably find ourselves wondering about how much of what I

* *The Making of Europe*, p. 286.

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have just said applies, and with what modifications, to Scotsmen, Welshmen and Irishmen. English is the language of more than England, indeed of more than Britain or even of the British Empire. It would be interesting to enquire into the degree to which the English language carries the English spirit with it, but that would mean broaching a new, an intricate, and possibly a controversial theme. I feel, however, that I cannot conclude without touching for a moment on the significance of English to Australians.

The English spirit has made the English language. Whoever uses the language comes under the influence of the spirit. But those who are not natives of England are subject to other influences also, the influences of cultural heredity and of geographical environment. In the case of people of British stock transplanted to other parts of the globe there is similarity of cultural heredity, but great variety in geographical environment. In some cases, the British cultural heritage may be modified by other contacts, as in the United States, Canada, and South Africa. This has not happened in Australia, where the British cultural background has not been modified by any significant native or foreign influences. Indeed, the relative isolation of Australia has kept away some influences which have affected the mother country, so that to English visitors Australians sometimes appear more British than the British. On the other hand, Australians have had to deal with a far greater change of geographical environment than any other community of overseas British origin. North America is Europe on a large scale; the same birds, the same animals, the same trees are common to both. In South America and South Africa, once accustomed to the reversed seasons of the southern hemisphere, a European finds more that is familiar than unfamiliar in his environment. But Australia is not only of another hemisphere but also of another evolutionary age. The gum trees and the kangaroos are typical of a flora and fauna which bear almost no relation to those of the rest of the world. Australians therefore have some particularly difficult problems of adjustment.

They have their cultural roots in a language and literature full of allusions and metaphors which lie outside the direct experience of the Australian who knows only Australia. At the same time, there has not yet been a long enough hereditary contact with Australian environment for the British Australian to become a native in his own new land. The time has not yet come when the kookaburra and the currawong can altogether be substituted for the thrush and the nightingale, or when the imagery of wattle-time and the wool-shed can altogether take the place of the imagery of the English spring with the greenwood and

the primroses, or of the English agricultural cycle with its harvest home.

But if the time has not yet come when the Australian spirit can have a pure Australian expression, that time will certainly draw nearer and nearer as the transplanted British culture takes firmer and firmer root in Australian soil. And the process will be accompanied by modifications of the language, which, though remaining English, will gradually take on a more and more distinctive flavour of its own. The first dictionary of Austral English was published nearly fifty years ago and might with advantage be brought up to date.* This is in the nature of things. It is right and proper that Australians should be Australian. At the same time, the reaction and adaptation to geographical environment need not mean separation from the parent stem. France, Italy and Spain are still called Latin countries fifteen hundred years after they ceased to be ruled by Rome, and I have no doubt that if the day ever comes when Macaulay's New Zealander takes his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's, he will still read the Bible in English, he will still be able to appreciate Shakespeare, and he will still call himself British.

* *Austral English: A Dictionary of Australian Words, Phrases and Usages*, by Edward E. Morris (Macmillan, 1898).

CHERBOURG

Cherbourg has fallen!
 They are there who felled it!
 From fields and hedges where lay the abandoned 'chutes,
 They have gathered a flag that never yet was a flag.
 The village women, as they once were wont
 In happier days to prepare the dress of a bride,
 With eager fingers have stitched the voluminous folds,
 Draped folds lying over their knees;
 And when silken and brave it flies mast-high
 Over the gabled Mairie, it speaks saying:
 "I bore to earth the first sky-comers to the soil of France.
 On pinions of the flag of France they hovered,
 Or side-slipped aslant the blue sky-drop,
 Making a puppet-play with Death, preluding
 The grim earth-work they came perforce to do."
 Bloody, relentless must that doing be!
 There is a crop of hate to reap
 Before the tardy soil relent
 And burgeon round with fruit.

There was a row of ochre-coloured houses,
 Old houses facing the quay of the old harbour,
 And in the Spring the fishing-boats would hurry back with their catch
 As the sun went down to the sea.
 Mère Taribou lived in the fourth house from the end.
 She would sit on the steps mending the nets,
 Her grey hair tightly knotted in a bun,
 Pulled away from the temples
 With many a hair-pin on the crown of her head.
 Mère Taribou's face was lined
 Like a railway junction seen from the air.
 Her dark, expressive eyes
 And her lips turned up were kind.
 She would be dressed in black
 With a white filet-lace collar petalling the stalk of her neck,
 And pinned with a silver brooch which framed
 Marius her worthy husband.

Are you there still, Mère Taribou?
 Is it many a day since you made that pot-au-feu?
 Take heart, my dear.
 Père Marius will come again,
 And younger than I knew him,
 His baskets full of the shining catch,
 The pick of the lot.
 Satisfied, you shall turn around
 And point a scolding finger at him, late,
 And greet him with a kiss on his swarthy cheeks
 (For you were very fond of that);
 And help him off with his oils

And on with his double-breasted coat.
 And later, the lobster shall raise Cain
 From the boiling aquarium of your pot,
 Where whiting and red mullet and eels
 Swim in the sea of soup.

O famished ones, you shall be fed,
 The sacred soil refurnished,
 And broom shall wave upon the cliffs in peace
 Above the spawning sea.

1944.

DONOVAN CLARKE.

THREE LYRICS FROM PUSHKIN

KAZBEK MONASTERY

Above thy fellow mountain heights,
 Kazbek, with everlasting lights
 Thy regal canopy is shining.
 Thy monastery, with clouds combining
 To form a shrine among the skies,
 Floats in mid-heaven past defining.

O distant, ever-longed-for prize!
 There, from the valleys I'd forsaken,
 To thy free summit would I sweep,
 And to a cloud-wreathed cell be taken,
 Thence to the arms of God to creep.

WINTER

Beneath the azure skies extended,
 Spread like a carpet rare and splendid,
 Afire with sunlight lies the snow.
 Darker the wood alone is growing,
 And frost-clad firs are greenly showing,
 And 'neath the ice bright waters flow.

THREE SPRINGS

Upon the world's plain dismal and unbounded,
 Three secret springs mysteriously rose:
 The wild swift fount of youth, from depths unsounded,
 Which sparkles, foams, and murmurs as it flows;
 Castalia's spring, whose wave of inspiration
 Waters the exiles on the world's wide plain;
 And last the sweet spring of annihilation,
 To cool our heart and wash away its pain.

(Translated from the Russian by R. H. Morrison)

THAT '42 FLOW

By KEN LEVIS

As the bright red lorry travelled along the back road the farmers would stop their work, point to it and say: "That's the bee-keeper's new truck! He must be putting a thing or two away now. A new truck from last year's honey! He must be worth something."

The bee-keeper was sitting by himself in his new cabin that smelt of sun-warm leather. He liked the smell and drove along at a nice easy pace, looking at the fresh green of the wheat fields. The green and chocolate paddocks stretched to the wooded hills. That was where the bee-keeper was going. He had hives up there amongst the yellow box. Yellow box gives the best honey. They knew it all through the west. Yellow box honey and his name. He was proud of both.

The little bee-keeper was light of heart. The day was perfect spring. His bees up there on the hills would be happy. You could do anything with bees on days like this. A high clear sky with a small shutter of thin cloud sliding away from the north horizon, the sun yellow on the fields. When the bright red lorry made a mob of new-shorn sheep race away across the paddock the bee-keeper hadn't a care in the world, and he started to sing very loudly "Farewell to Thee".

But the hills kept on peering through the windscreen and his thoughts raced away up there with the bees jostling thick at the hives. Then up into the yellow box trees, in the airy shade amongst the lazy branches. His thoughts were busy with his bees. Plenty of honey, plenty of pollen; water handy, and if Dan Shepherd hadn't shouted at the top of his lungs, he'd have gone sailing by him without stopping.

Dan was tall, with big hands and a stoop as if his centre of gravity moved between his shoulder blades. He had firm political convictions that the bank books of all landholders should be inspected once every three years. Then their owners should be hunted from their holdings for inefficiency. When not advancing this theory he had a noisy sense of humour that stood him in good stead as he went round resetting his traps and contemplating an empty future.

He poked his head through the dust stirred up by the lorry's abrupt stop.

"Take it easy, Tony old man! You've got it bad today. Just get your mind off the widow for a change, will you? She'll keep till you get up in the hills."

Saying this, he laughed tremendously. Tony accelerated and said: "How're the rabbits?"

"What? Who's talking about rabbits? They're all right. Carcasses better than skins and the freezer'll take them now. There's a livin' in 'em still. Listen!" he boomed. "You nearly run me down then! Give the widow a break, man. Think of your friends while we're with you! Pull yourself together!"

Tony turned his blue eyes on him goodhumouredly. "I've enough to think of, important things, without havin' to worry about you and females", he said.

"Worry's the word", shouted Dan. "The widow'll give you something to worry about. You'll go up in them hills once too often. She'll grab you yet!"

"Not me", said Tony. "I go for other things", he said. "There's a wonderful flow of honey up there this year. I said there'd be, remember? Three years since the last big flow in the hills and when the trees let you down in the second year, the third'll be a bumper. There'll be more honey than my bees can handle."

It was time for Dan's joke. "Ha! Ha! Still stung by the bees, Tony!" Tony had heard that joke so often he didn't notice it this time and went on with his thoughts.

"God, it's tough! Honey there and the bees can't cart it away. Hundreds of tons of it just dripping out of the cups. Dripping away. Yellow box honey. Dripping into the ground."

"Get the widow to help!" Dan shouted to his own delight. "And drop me at the mail box, will ya!" he boomed. "Now, think what you're doing! Mail Box! That's it. Thing they put the mail in! And hold yourself under control up there."

"And keep 'em out of yer bonnet!" Dan's farewell joke.

Tony wasn't sorry when Dan had gone. Decent enough cove, but tiresome over the widow. She didn't mean a thing to him. No, sir! And she wasn't chasing him. Goodnatured woman and hospitable, that was all. He could shut his mind to her any time. The bees were enough for him. Yes, sir! Tony and his bees. He knew them, they knew him. He understood them and the country. He shifted them with the season, stacked them on his lorry and off with them a hundred, two hundred, three hundred miles. Wherever the right kind of blossoms would be that year.

And there was his diary right back, from 1920. Every season. He knew the trees right through the State and there was his three-yearly programme worked out. Yes, sir! Tony knew his bees and his trees.

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Bees and trees and his honey. They'd given him this new truck. Now he could carry any amount of honey, any number of hives. Tony was getting somewhere.

The two front windows of the house of Mrs. Garrett, the widow, stared out from under the low verandah. The place appeared to have had its roof pulled over its ears. Mrs. Garrett, who had one daughter, had achieved widowhood suddenly and with great fame. All because of Mr. Garrett's inordinate love for peaches.

One day as he ploughed in his stony cultivation paddock, Mr. Garrett had stolen away from the pantry a tin of yellow slipstones. He let half of them slide down his throat for morning lunch and left the rest in the tin for lunch in the afternoon. But the sun got at them in the meantime and that night he put on immortality, his wife a widow's name.

As soon as Gracie, the widow's daughter, saw Tony's lorry shining down the lane, she dropped the clothes she was about to peg out and ran so quickly to the house that she forgot to take out of her mouth the peg she was holding.

Her mother showed great excitement at the news. "Go!" she said. "Open the gate so the bee-keeper won't have to stop on the slope. Keep talking to him while I get out of these old washing duds."

When Tony saw the widow's daughter, a girl of seventeen, running to open the gate he grinned. He liked the shape of her figure running down the slope. A bit of all right in the distance. Not so good close up because her face was covered with freckles and a complexion not interested in honey even as a face lotion. Tony didn't like her, either. She had once said bees always stung her.

Gracie rode with Tony in the driver's cabin to the pepper trees beside the house and called out, "Ma! Here's the honey gentleman."

Mrs. Garrett came out, bustling with surprise as if the news was a sudden shock. "Why, Mr. Gubbins!" she said. "Do come in before you go on up to the hives. I want you to taste the mead we made from that '42 flow. I put corn and blood plums with it. See if you've ever swallowed better tasting stuff!"

Mrs. Garrett was forty, with a large, moist, goodnatured personality and body.

Tony followed her through the door into the dimness they called the kitchen. It seemed Mrs. Garrett, remembering her husband's fate, excluded all light. Tony sat himself on the woodbox by the stove, gently because the top piece of wood had a sharp edge.

The widow was still talking. "That was great honey, that '42 flow", she said as she poured out a glass for herself and Tony. "Just

swallow this mead. Oh, it's lovely. Beautiful tasting stuff!" she said. "Lovely to drink!"

Tony said, "Won't Gracie have some, too?"

Gracie made a face and said, "It's horrible stuff! You can have all mine. I don't know how mum drinks it. She's real soony over it!"

Tony drank thoughtfully and smiled. "It's lovely stuff", he said, and felt more at ease. He shifted his seat to the table-edge. It was more comfy. "Beautiful tastin' stuff", he said.

"Bring some cake, Gracie", said the widow. "Bring some cake for Mr. Gubbins. He might like cake to top off with. Bachelors generally don't see too much of cake." Gracie went to the pantry.

When Gracie went back to finish hanging out the clothes, Tony realised he was again alone with the widow and remembered Dan's words. He thought to go directly, but the honey mead was buzzing comfortably inside his head and the widow was still talking.

"When we were down in the city for holidays all they had was horrible yellow stuff. Green honey. Not matured at all! That's all they had in the shops; just that thin cheap stuff. No flavour! Remember that flow of Wild Apple you got in '36 near Coonabarabran? The best honey you ever had!"

"Ah, no", said Tony. "The Molong Yellow Box you made this mead from's been the best. This year's flow here might beat it. And there's plenty of pollen to build the hives up.

"It's a good place", he went on after a minute's silence. "The bees waste no time and energy going for water. This is a wonderful spot."

The widow looked at him closely. She moved over near him and reached for a paper stuck behind the mantelpiece, touching his arm as she leant. She was still certainly a fine figure of a woman!

"Here", she said. "Here's how to deal with bee lice. I found this in a paper."

When Tony and the widow walked on up to the hives, it seemed to him as though they were walking through sunlight so thick that their bodies thrust it aside as they moved. Perhaps it was the mead buzzing inside his head. Or just the sun after the kitchen. He felt suddenly high-spirited.

"The air up here in the hills is worth sixpence a pint!" said the widow gaily.

Tony inhaled, banged his chest, and stopped to watch a pink and grey flock of galahs swing in play up to the trees.

The hives stood neatly in rows, oblong like tombstones, white against the trees. Tony went to them eagerly. "Look!" he cried. "See how they're building up!"

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The widow observed his enthusiasm with patient amusement.

"It's a wonderful spot, all right", he said, looking about. "Trees, bees, flowers, water."

The widow spoke softly. "It's a place to settle in", she said. "Aren't you tired of tramping the State?"

"You need someone to help you", she went on quietly. "Remember the day you showed us your extractor? How many tins did we get that day?"

"Twenty-three", said Tony thickly.

"And what do you get by yourself?"

"Fourteen."

The widow was standing close beside him. She looked steadily into his blue eyes. "You'd be very happy up here", she said earnestly. "The bees and the farm in between. We'd be very comfortable."

At this the mead inside Tony's head began buzzing more and more loudly. His knees felt weak and inside his body seemed like water. The sun was hot and everything still and he all alone with the widow right there beside him. Closer than in the kitchen. She was watching him and waiting for him to say something. Her breathing became suddenly intimate.

Suddenly Tony knew there was nothing he could do about it. Awkwardly he put his arms as far as they would go around the widow. At once he felt foolish standing there, a little man hugging this big woman. Suppose someone saw them! The widow pressed Tony to her.

"Ah, Tony!" she said, fingering his ear, "I've dreamt of this!" Tony felt more and more awkward, but the feel of her breasts against him was a strange, new sensation.

"Now kiss me!" she said.

Tony did his best.

It is doubtful how long he would have gone on clutching the widow had she not saved things by sitting down and holding his hand.

For some time she talked. Tony couldn't follow her words. All his mind did was to whirl: Gawd, now I've done it! Gawd, now I've done it! What'll they say? Still she's not bad. What'll they say? What'll Dick say? She makes good mead, that's one thing. Good mead . . . good mead . . . until he realised what he was thinking and suddenly became very happy and burst out laughing.

The widow had been saying that her daughter Gracie was a goodhearted, plain girl who would get on well with her new father. She looked at Tony with surprise when he burst out laughing in the middle of her words. She stared at him. Tony laughed and laughed

until he was sure of himself. The widow joined with him, a little doubtfully.

"Come to the house", she said hurriedly. "This calls for the '42 to celebrate!"

When they came under the pepper trees they could hear Gracie's voice. She was talking on the party phone.

"It looks like it this time!" she was saying. "Mother's got him cornered at last. Up in the bee paddock. There's not much hope for him now. . . ."

Tony's laughter burst out of control. He laughed so that it hurt his chest, his eyes wet with the tears of his laughter. The hurried way Gracie rang off made it all the funnier. He saw the widow looking at him in alarm. She rushed off to the kitchen.

As she seized the bottle of honey mead in her shaking hands there was one thought in her mind. "Thank God for that '42 flow!" she said over and over to herself. "Thank God for that '42 flow!"

IN PRAISE OF CACTOBLASTUS

Ten thousand prosperous men
Will live where once the pear
Grew in such mass, a wren
Could find no trackway there,
Nor man nor beast could dwell
In that green silent hell.

Children will joy to find
All golden fruits to eat,
Young men will go to bind,
Singing, the golden wheat;
Old men will pledge in beer
The Eden that is here.

And all because you came
And were content to be
One great and hungry flame
To drink that evil sea;
And, all that sea drunk dry,
You were content to die.

ERNEST G. MOLL.

"I FIRST ADVENTURE"

By R. G. HOWARTH

"Of all the fruits of Barron Field's busy pen, first and last", writes Dr. E. Morris Miller in his *Australian Literature*,* "only one couplet remains which has achieved something like immortality by frequent quotation:

I first adventure; follow me who list;
And be the second Austral harmonist."

Even such a modicum of eternity must, however, be withdrawn from Field. Surprisingly enough, it does not appear to be generally known that, far from being the author of the couplet, which appeared as a motto on the title-page to his *First Fruits of Australian Poetry*, 1819,† he merely alters the words of the Elizabethan satirist Joseph Hall. This is acknowledged‡ in the second, enlarged edition, published in 1823, and also in the third edition appended to *Geographical Memoirs of New South Wales; by Various Hands*, which came out, under Field's editorship, in 1825.

The Prologue to Book I of Hall's Satires, which were issued in 1597-8 with the general title of *Virgidemiarum Libri Sex*** and reprinted in 1599, 1602, 1753, 1808 and 1810, begins:

I first adventure, with fool-hardy might,
To tread the steps of perilous despite.
I first adventure, follow me who list,
And be the second English satirist.††

Hall was not the first English satirist, but it suited his youthful arrogance to make the claim, and certainly his verses are the first of their kind in smooth couplets.

The original edition of *First Fruits* was reviewed by Lamb, a friend of Field's (who is the "B.F." of "Distant Correspondents" and "Mackery End in Hertfordshire"), in *The Examiner* for January 16, 1820. Prefixed to this article is the couplet motto. Recognising the adaptation of Hall, E. V. Lucas, the editor of *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, 1912, comments:‡‡ "This couplet was placed

* Volume I, page 20.

† In the form:

I first adventure. Follow me who list;
And be the second Austral Harmonist.

‡ "Adapted from Bishop Hall" (he became Bishop of Exeter and of Norwich).

** *Virgidemia* is a gathering or harvest of rods.

†† Quoted from Chalmers's *English Poets*, 1810, Volume V, page 264.

‡‡ Volume I, page 494.

by Field on the threshold of the poems in the *Geographical Memoirs*, borrowed, I imagine, from Lamb's review." Evidently Lucas had not seen the rare first edition and was unaware of the second edition of Field's poems.

The possibility that Field drew the primary suggestion from Lamb of course must not be overlooked, but—as would be evident from the other quotations and borrowings in his book—Field was sufficiently familiar with Elizabethan literature to have read even one of the early texts of *Virgidemiarum*. In any event, the couplet had recently been given wide currency by Dr. Johnson's citation of it under "satirist" in the revised editions of his Dictionary, 1765 to 1773.

Field's adaptation of Hall was neat and pertinent. Perhaps no better frame of words could have been found by anyone in a new country wishing to proclaim himself as a poet and issue a challenge to others. Nor are the poems so fanfared—like his Australian landscape in the hypothetical absence of the kangaroo—an "utter failure". In spite of the hard things that have been said about them and even of recent discriminating praise, it is possible that the author's aims and the character of his work are not yet quite understood. The key to understanding lies in Lamb's praise of "The Kangaroo": "We . . . are mistaken if it does not relish of the graceful hyperboles of our elder writers. We can conceive it to have been written by Andrew Marvell, supposing him to have been banished to Botany Bay." It was Marvell's exquisite alloy of humour and seriousness that Field, too, aimed to achieve. He wrote playfully, not gravely, certain of the lines in his poem which, instead of causing the smile of pleasure intended, have been mistakenly held up to ridicule. Even a "harmonist" might make light music.

DESICCATION

They are talking in the high places,
the great ones, the ignorant
who should be wise,
how the good earth is blowing
away on the dry winds,
but they never think about it
till it gets in their eyes.

PAUL L. GRANO.

THE NEEDLE TRICK*

By NORMAN LINDSAY

The senior class of the Redheap Grammar School worked, idled, shuffled or sought submerged diversion, as its component parts elected for scholarship or boredom. A pleasing somnolence of afternoon lay on the class-room, product of springtime and its temperate warmth. Fadley Gudgeon, headmaster, teetered in his chair in a gentle state of abstraction, not altogether to be trusted as such. Acts of detection frequently emerged from Fadley's states of abstraction, to be marked with ponderous irony or a clouting of heads. A subtle sibilance of frock fabrics, hair-tossings and whispers came from the two front desks, reserved to the girls. Co-education had been forced on Fadley Gudgeon by the town's dwindling population, which diminished the supply of male scholars.

On that peaceful scene, a scream, as of one in mortal anguish—Fatty Bunce, in short, leaping from his seat to claw frantically at his bottom with one hand, while exploring the seat of his desk with the other.

"Tut tut! Bunce, what do you mean by this indecent uproar?" demanded Fadley.

"Something bit me."

"What do you mean by something?"

"Something stuck a sting in me."

"You mean that someone punctured you with a sharp instrument. If so, who, not what, did it?"

Fatty scowled at faces to right and left and behind him, all indignant at an implication of sticking sharp instruments into his fat backside.

"I dunno who it was", he complained.

"Then sit down and go on with your work."

Fatty sat down with excessive caution and suspicion, but without disastrous results, and the class resumed its various states of passivity. But not for long. Two seats back Benny Daniels emitted a scream of anguish while leaping up to apply frantic massage to his rump, and announce, in terms identical with Fatty's, that something had bitten him. Tut-tutting annoyance, Fadley again investigated a disturbance on the calm of scholarship without detecting its disturber. That investigation was still in progress when Meaty O'Donnell, three seats

* The opening of a new novel, not yet published, designed as an "investigation into the later adolescence" of the boy-heroes of "*Saturdee*". It is entitled *Halfway to Anywhere*.

away, leapt up to scream and clutch his rear and announce an assault on it by an invisible insect.

"Tut tut tut tut TUT!" boomed Fadley. "This is intolerable. This is preposterous. No insect known to science selects a precise section of the human anatomy to operate on. A sentient intelligence is at work here. Unless——", he eyed the sufferers with dark suspicion, "we are confronted with a conspiracy to disturb scholarship by uproar."

Indignant protests from the possessors of the three punctured backsides at that, and offers to prove punctures, if called upon to do so. Fadley rasped his beard and twitched his long nose and scowled at the class over his glasses. Long experience rendered him immune from pretensions to rectitude presented for his inspection by the human young.

"Then we are thrown back on the presumption of a sentient intelligence, if such a term can be applied to the lout responsible for this base attack on his fellows. I suggest an instrument for ejecting darts and withdrawing them. Possibly by a string attached to the dart. All those seated within the range of such an instrument will file past my desk and exhibit the contents of their pockets."

He lumbered to his desk, scowling at an imposition on his practised powers of detecting a criminal procedure. An immense man with a pendulous belly and fatly pendulous cheeks sprouting an untidy beard, he disliked exertion and objected to intellectual tension other than that applied to a text-book. No doubt his long sardonic nose had its own opinions on the value of mechanically acquired knowledge, but was too discreet to air them in public.

The investigation of pockets may have rewarded an inquiry into the diversity of portable property carried abroad by the human young, but no device for ejecting and withdrawing darts was detected among it. Grunting annoyance and tut-damn-tutting under his breath, Fadley investigated desks and school-bags with the same result, and gave it up, as it was now four o'clock.

"Very well, school is dismissed", he said. "We will pursue this investigation later, if there is any recurrence of these criminal activities. We have prefects whose office is to detect and bring to justice such misdemeanours. They appear to be extremely lax in performing that duty."

"But Cripes, we can't see what blokes are doing at the other end of the desk", protested Bill Gimble, prefect.

"Do not preface utterance with that ridiculous evasion referring to a member of the Holy Trinity", said Fadley testily. "The three

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of you had better remain here and see if you can detect any trickery we may have overlooked."

Those three, Bill Gimble, Waldo Peddler and Jobags Parkin, remained while the school filed out, and Fadley lumbered off too. Sam Gudgeon, second master and son to Fadley, had already dismissed his class and himself from the smaller class-room. Alone in the deserted school, those prefects gave way to an exhibition of indecent mirth, pounding each other's backs and turning handsprings over desks. Said Bill Gimble, having had his laugh out, "Well by Cripes, I never thought it would have come off so absolutely."

"Worked like anything", exulted Waldo Peddler.

"All the same, we better go a bit slow on it case old Gudgi spots how it works", counselled Jobags Parkin, a weighty cumbersome lad, and therefore inclined to urge caution on intemperate actions.

"Why, old Gudgi had his eye fair on it and never spotted it", said Bill. "We got him flumdoodled absolutely."

"Flumdoodled absolutely is the word", said Waldo Peddler. Short and stocky and with a pugnacious underlip, Waldo had the bumptious bearing required by his lack of inches. His social status was that of dear friend to Bill Gimble. Bill Gimble was dear friend to Waldo Peddler. To each other, they were the only people of any real importance on earth.

"Better see about getting it fixed up for tomorrow", he said to Bill.

A subdued whistle, interrogative, sounded without, answered by Bill with the whistle affirmative. On that a coconut with a small cap perched on top of it was intruded cautiously round the door to ask guardedly, "All square about comin' in, blokes?"

"All square, Minkey", said Bill condescendingly, and the coconut, otherwise Minkey Dibbs, a minor, came in, disclosed as an undersized lad with outstanding ears and a convict crop, which made a specialty of his ears by inviting attention to his cranial dimensions of a coconut. Swaggering a little in the presence of his elders, he said, "Was I right about the way it worked!"

"Yes, we own it worked a treat", admitted Bill. "And by Cripes, we better settle who we're going to work it on tomorrow before old Poulter comes to clean the school."

Three victims for puncturing selected, Bill sat in turn at each seat and bored a hole in it with a very small bradawl, while Waldo and Jobags detached from under three other seats a diabolical mechanism for puncturing backsides seated on them. This was no more than a stout needle with a length of thin fishing-line and a small lead sinker

attached to the eye. A tiny screweye was then inserted under each seat an inch from the hole bored by Bill. The needle was then pushed upwards through the hole till its point rested just below the seat, while the fishing-line was led through the eyehole and along under the seat to the end desk, where sat a prefect. A knot at the screweye prevented the needle from slipping any further downward and the sinker jerked it back when a tug at the string jerked it upward. Against the four-inch piece of quartering which supported the seat, this minute device was practically invisible in the dusty shadow cast by the seat. Only by groping under it might a finger chance to hook the fishing-line.

Minkey Dibbs, a newcomer to the school, had brought this device of the invisible needle from the last school afflicted by his patronage, and had imparted it to Bill, who had imparted it to his brother prefects. They, pledged to the maintenance of order, had succumbed to evil counsels. Impossible to resist the thrill of puncturing backsides by black magic.

Minkey, its junior wizard, had a just grievance to protest. "All right for you blokes, doing the pulling. I work out the needle trick and don't get a chance to pull the string."

"But you're at the other end of the seat", Bill pointed out. "Pulling it your end would mean getting blokes up our end."

"Cripes, no, couldn't have blokes getting it close to us. Old Gudgi might think we were doing it", said Waldo.

"Well, I reckon it's playing it pretty low down on a bloke, not letting him have a pull at the string", grumbled Minkey.

A presumptuous claim to privilege with his elders was dismissed, and the conclave in black magic dismissed itself, as old Poulter, the school custodian, was arriving with his official bucket and broom.

Let next morning's school be summarised on a procedure already amplified as the frenzied howls and leapings and backside clutchings of scholars and the equally frenzied tut-tutting of Fadley Gudgeon over his failure to detect the miscreants disrupting the practice of scholarship. Sam Gudgeon was called in to assist the investigation, and though he also peered under seats, he failed to detect the mechanism lurking in their shadow. Sam, who had inherited Fadley's long sardonic nose, said to the school at large: "You young blighters haven't any discretion. It's a hundred to one you'll be bowled out in the end, and believe me, you'll get a hundred per cent. whacking when you are. So chuck it while you're still safe."

Sam, suspended on an awkward dilemma of detachment from a parent and professional deference to him as headmaster, used a

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diction extreme from Fadley's measured periods and pedantic style, which is inflicted on schoolmasters by an enforced attention to the rules of syntax. He went back to his class-room and Fadley divided his own class into two sections, setting a lesson for the general mass of scholars and taking over the matriculation class for special tuition, which meant moving that group into the front desk, to be immediately under his eye, and shifting the girls two seats back. Running his school on economic principles, these class divisions were enforced on him.

And here, strangely, a reseating of backsides suspended a criminal assault on them, as Waldo and Jobags were in the matriculation class, which detached them from operating their strings, and Bill was moved one seat back beyond reach of his.

Bill lolled in his seat, a theme in English composition noted in his exercise book, but not a line of it written. That was the good thing about old Gudgi's system of tuition; he imparted it and let you do what you liked about profiting by it. Possibly his system regarded mechanical learning as so much lumber to be forgotten as soon as possible, but it got fair enough results, since no scholar memorises the subject matter of text-books unless he wishes to do so, and a good pass at the yearly exam. meant for the senior students one step nearer to freedom from scholarship, or a pleasing resumption of it at the university.

So Bill lolled in his seat, out of action to engage his mental processes. At fifteen-and-a-half, states of meditation are to be avoided; they induce states of boredom. A restless urge in the blood insists on action, either as a diversion or as an objective in itself.

The only objective under Bill's eye was a row of girls' backs, and girls, no matter what section of the feminine canon they presented for inspection, were not objectives of any significance to Bill; an exponent of the life crudely masculine, which had not yet discovered that the male ego reaches its supreme awareness of masculinity by contact with a feminine earth. In private meditation, or in converse with friends, Bill may have discussed a special male function in relation to girls, and found it an engrossing subject of speculation, but as yet, the rigorous action of a crude male earth had found no place for girls in its affairs. Incompetence, disguised as boorish scorn for the graces, still anchored Bill in a state of celibacy. Therefore he now regarded with uninspired eye a very nice exhibit in neat frocks, long hair, clean linen, a pleasing scent of girl and a row of attractive legs, if one cared to peer under the seat and find out what happened to that section of the exhibit which was cut off short by being sat on.

Bill did not peer at legs, but his eye was certainly on that section of femininity cut off short by the seat, under which was the diabolic mechanism of the invisible needle, with its point poised precisely under an exhibit labelled Polly Tanner.

Not for one moment did Bill contemplate a base assault on a sacrosanct section of the feminine anatomy. The problem presented to him was purely one of mechanics. Supposing a bloke reached his toe out under the desk, could he hook it in the string under the seat in front of him?

One slight disadvantage of a system which posits action as inspiration is that action is apt to take charge of a procedure before inspiration has time to forecast its consequences. All Bill did was to reach out his toe . . .

A piercing scream from Polly Tanner and a distracted leaping up to clutch at skirts with a gasp of "It's bitten me——"

"Tut tut tut tut TUT", boomed Fadley, rising in majestic fury. "This outrage is final. A brutal assault on feminine amnesty from physical violence. A filthy trick. A dam-tut trick. Someone in this class knows who is doing it, if not implicated himself. I call on that someone to come forward and inform in honourable terms on the lout who is responsible for this disgusting attack on one of our ladies. . . ."

Once again, that investigation of a crime got nowhere. No one came forward to inform on its miscreant, though it was clear that there were afflicted backsides present burning to do so. Fadley fumed and boomed fury, exasperated at a superior cunning flaunting its immunity from detection under his nose. The girls hissed whispers and tossed indignant hair, casting glances of outraged decorum at a base assortment of males, as daring the scoundrel of Fadley's denunciation lurking among them to try it on with one of them. . . .

Nor did that scoundrel, anonymously castigated by Fadley, escape opinion by his fellow miscreants, when the conclave met at morning recess behind the high board fence which shut off the girls' playground from the larger space given over to male recreation. Here Bill's action in puncturing Polly Tanner was tabled for a severe condemnation by Jobags Parkins, whose general lumpishness marked him as one destined for aldermanic distinction, and a high, if slightly delayed, sense of the social obligation.

"Here's where it stands", he said. "Pinking blokes with the needle is fair game. Pinking girls is out of the game as playing it low down on a bloke's sense of honour."

"What d'y'er mean, a bloke's sense of honour?" blustered Bill, conscious of guilt, but doing his best with a pose of the tough male,

immune from enfeebling sentiment. "I got no time for guff about a bloke's sense of honour."

"I put the case a bloke's a dirty dog sticking needles in girls."

"I put the case a bloke's a sport taking a risk with the needle trick."

"It's a noted fact sport rules out sticking needles in girls."

"I put the case, does a bloke call himself a gentleman or does he not?"

"Who bloomin' well calls himself a gentleman? I call meself a sport. Bloke's game to take risks proves himself a sport."

"Using toes under desks to do the needle trick on girls ain't the point. I put the case, supposin' you were walking up the street with girls, would you up and stick needles in them?"

"What you getting at? Bloke 'ud be a mug sticking needles in girls where they could spot him doing it."

"Proves my point a bloke's a stinkin' funk doing it under desks when he ain't game to do it fair and square with girls walking up the street. Ain't I right, Waldo?"

Waldo, adherent of the tough school, preferred to dodge this leading question by a resort to casuistry. "Bloke's a mug who goes walking up the street with girls, so that's out", he said.

"Out absolutely", affirmed Bill. "And here's my point about doing the needle trick on girls. I never done it—me toe did. All I done was to see if a bloke could reach the string with his toe."

Jobags would have none of these specious evasions. "When it comes to doing the low down on girls with the needle trick I'm out of the game for good", he said sternly.

Minkey Dibbs, permitted to attend the conclave, snuffled opinion through his nose at all this straw-splitting over a triviality. "Blowed if I care who we do the needle trick on", he said. "My idea is to do it on old Gudgi himself."

This monstrous proposal disturbed the others greatly. It also attacked their prestige, as a claim to superior recklessness from an unimportant junior. "Talk sense. How could you work it on old Gudgi when he don't sit on our seats?" said Bill.

"You could work it on his chair."

"That's out. String would be spotted first go off."

"No it wouldn't. I had a look to see how to work it. String out behind the blackboard and round the wall where it's dead dark under the windows. Old Gudgi never moves his chair. You can spot its worn identical holes in the floor never being moved. Couldn't go wrong on it in a million."

All regarded their satanic parasite with consternation. Alarm at the threat of a dangerous enterprise was combated by the thrill of inspired criminality. And there Minkey put on them the compulsion that no man may reject and still claim the dignity of manhood.

"Own up if you're game or do you funk it?" he said.

Said Bill, scowling, "All right, we're game, but as you're so bloomin' well set on having a pull at the string you can pull it on old Gudgi yourself."

The chair was fixed and awful premonitions attended a concept of attacking Fadley's august fundament. Minkey, by barter with Bunt Hodgetts of a pencil case and a broken-bladed knife for an end seat, was now in control of the string leading from the chair by devious routes along the skirting board within reach of Minkey's hand, where the dropping of a pen might cover the act of taking a pull at it. But there, with the stage set for a tremendous finale in drama, Minkey's nerve failed him. The portent of Fadley's sixteen stone ponderously posited on the submerged point of a needle conjured up an image of nemesis for an unholy deed even in Minkey's cranial coconut. The other conspirators, also poised on the too intense suspense of a monstrous act, kept sending scowls and nods at Minkey to do the awful deed.

But there, what Minkey faltered at doing, Fadley did for him. Precautions against detection had overlooked a principle in mechanics relating to pull and pressure automatically applied. It was true that Fadley's chair had worn four circular holes in the pine boarded floor by the inertia of habit which found it less trouble for Fadley to shift his bulk than to shift the chair. Now, with the class set a Latin exercise to include the present, future and imperfect of the verb *regere*, to rule, he relaxed from the present to the imperfect tense himself by going into a gentle doze of abstraction.

Waking-dozing may impose on itself a pleasing sense of physical rhythm by gently teetering on the back legs of its chair. But Fadley teetered no further than the first impetus of his chair backwards, which exploded in him a frenzied bellow and shot him upwards as propelled by powerful forces operating in his backside.

Aghast, the conspirators saw him bend to inspect the seat of his chair. So bending, by a reasoned induction, he tilted the chair, and that fatal needle came up and looked at him. Uttering the loud "Hah!" of a thesis in logic solved at last, Fadley groped under the chair to tug at and bring aloft its damning attachment. With another "Ha hah!" of vengeance exultant, he followed the string to its precise location to grab Minkey by the scruff and lug him up, and exhibit him under the

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caption of, "Our first scoundrel. There must be others. The whole class will stand out of their seats and move one pace backwards. Samuel, here a moment."

That summons produced Sam Gudgeon, to whom Fadley said: "Keep the class under inspection for any suspicious action while I make an investigation."

Groping under each seat in turn, three diabolic needles were detached and three criminals infallibly located by following up three strings. Contemplating their enfeebled scowls of guilt, Fadley ejected at them his most sardonic "Ah hah!"

"So! Gimble. Parkin. Peddler. Our three prefects. A conspiracy to defeat good government by those expressly pledged to maintain it. A corruption at the very core of our state. Not to mention a sadistic attack on its subjects, degrading both in concept and execution. This criminality demands a retort in kind. Follow me, scoundrels."

A pedantic impeachment, which deleted all ornament from the straightforward prose of its execution, which was to bend each miscreant in turn over a desk and administer an ardent walloping to each rump with a cane, to the gratification of a Roman audience turning thumbs down on the ignominy of defeated criminals.

They were then formally degraded of office, warned to walk warily in future under a now established reputation for criminality, and Fadley, well breathed by his exertions, dismissed the school.

For my past suffering from *Hate*
Just *God* I dared reprove;
But all those Injuries are ore,
Now Hee has given me *Love*;

A *Love* that of its Nature heales,
And stills such cleare *Content*,
That I am like a *Patriot* home
After longe Banishment.

If I that *Gifte* at times may seeme
To vawe lesse then due,
Forgive mee Deare (and *God*), it is
Too fine, and yett too newe.

ANON. (fl. c. 1650).

AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE*

By KENNETH SLESSOR

It is fourteen years, I think, since I was given the honour of responding to the toast of "Australian Literature" at a previous dinner of the Australian English Association. That was in 1930, and it was held, I think, in this same hall.

By chance, a few days ago I came across a copy of the address I made on that occasion. Looking at it again, over a space of time in which many unsuspected changes have taken place, both in Australian literature and in myself, I am slightly astonished at the fine immoderation of the terms and views which I had the almighty nerve to express in 1930.

For my part, I had more hair then, and less waist-line. As for Australian literature, it had, I think, more illusions then, and less uncertainty. In fourteen years it has produced works quite comparable to—in fact, I believe, in some respects even more important than—most of the works produced during the thirty years of this century which went before. But to make the dogmatic statements which I made fourteen years ago would require more bravery or carefree faith than I now possess.

Yet certain fundamentals of those views, which were expressed with a positiveness I wish I could feel today, remain unshaken in my mind. Notably, the appeal to literary values, rather than to literary museum-keeping, on which ground I assaulted such a standard anthology as *The Oxford Book of Australasian Verse*.

The importance of cultivating our values, of preserving and defending them, is still a vital one. Much can change in fourteen years, but values do not change. The great fundamentals of all the arts persist from age to age. They persist with a deadly and silent permanence which is at once maddening to the literary anarchist, treacherous sometimes to the literary conservative, and the final argument for good or bad in writing as in painting or in making music. That is, at least, one verity which the passage of the years has proved.

It is to such a movement as this Association, and to its members and to those who share their interests, that the responsibility of cultivating and preserving our Australian values must largely belong. But those who should be most actively concerned with this eternal vigilance are our critics—I mean, our critics whose words are published. There are many other very good critics whose words are

* An address given at the Twenty-first Anniversary Dinner of the Australian English Association on November 23, 1944.

never published, and therefore lost as a major influence. Sometimes we hear the phrase: "A self-appointed critic." But if a critic cannot appoint himself, who can? Every reader is his own critic. There is nothing in the National Security Regulations, I believe, to prevent anyone at all from criticising. In fact, I believe that a reader or student who does not criticise is not properly reading or studying.

But the critics who are really what you might call the Home Guard in the field of literary values are the critics, professional or semi-professional, whose judgments are printed in newspapers or magazines or broadcast over the air, so that they reach the eyes and ears and minds of thousands of others. We have been fortunate in Australia on the whole, I think, with our critics of this kind. Although I have violently disagreed with many, there is not one Australian professional critic in my knowledge who has not a foundation of sincerity. For my part, I have never quarrelled with a critic's honesty. And a basis of sincerity and honesty for criticism is a great thing, no matter how we may disagree with the technical views which are built upon it.

It would be hard to estimate what an enormous influence for good is exercised over contemporary Australian writing, and the writing of the future, by such a critic as Mr. H. M. Green, or by critics such as Mrs. Nettie Palmer or Mr. R. G. Howarth, or by a dozen other writers whose names are less familiar, but whose serious analyses and examinations appear in various magazines. It is possible, from this perspective, to realise also how the currents of the past were swayed by such men as A. G. Stephens, in his less erratic phases, and Bertram Stevens.

The professional critic has not so far had an easy time of it in Australia. His position has been nebulous, his means of living by his work uncertain and sometimes impossible. There have been few periodicals willing to give space to him. Even today, far more attention is paid in daily papers to criticism of painting and music (most of it extremely good) than to criticism of Australian writing. The implication is that the average reader (of whose mentality some newspapers take a rather scornful view) is more directly responsive to painting and music than he is to literature. A big step forward will be made when newspapers are induced to examine current Australian literature as severely as they scan the fields of art and music.

When I deal with this matter of values, too, I find that my indignation on the subject of *The Oxford Book of Australasian Verse* has kept pleasantly warm since 1930. *The Oxford Book* still seems to be designed more on the lines of a museum or a mausoleum than

on the lines of a living record of Australian poetry. The motives and ideas of the editors—their understanding of poetry, their sense of good or bad, major or minor—in short, their values—still seem to me to be quite distorted and mysterious.

We find, for example, that *The Oxford Book* begins with a couple of literary curiosities by William Charles Wentworth and Sir Henry Parkes. If they had been written by John Jones, ticket-of-leave man, or by Henry Higgins, pork butcher, they would certainly never have been revived. It follows that their inclusion in the anthology has been dictated by historical or sentimental reasons, and not by the merciless and completely unsentimental yardstick of pure poetry.

We find thirteen pages of Adam Lindsay Gordon, fourteen pages of Henry Kendall, six pages by a worthy gentleman named Frank S. Williamson, six pages of Archibald T. Strong, nine pages of Furnley Maurice, and fourteen pages of cement-like quality by Bernard O'Dowd. In contrast, there are only three short pieces by Leon Gellert, three short pieces by the incomparable Hugh McCrae, four short pieces by Christopher Brennan, two short pieces by Robert Crawford (a writer who has never been given the appreciation which is his due) and two short pieces by that true poet Mary Gilmore.

That *The Oxford Book of Australasian Verse* should be sold publicly, and circulated among many people who are taught or encouraged to regard it as an accurate record or directive of Australian poetry, is an appalling menace to Australian poetry. That is merely my own opinion, and it is, of course, a highly biased opinion. But until the Australian reader of poetry gives up the idea cultivated by *The Oxford Book*—the idea that Adam Lindsay Gordon or Henry Kendall or other canonised gentlemen are touchstones of the slightest poetic significance—we shall, I am convinced, be cursed with a continuance of false values.

At the risk of being prosecuted for treason, I may go farther and say that the stubborn insistence of many authorities—not Mr. H. M. Green or Mr. Howarth—on the point that Henry Lawson is a great Australian poet, and not (as he is) a great and superb writer of Australian prose-sketches, is a monstrous injustice both to Henry Lawson and to Australian literary standards. Every time Lawson is referred to popularly or loosely as “the poet Lawson” is a perpetuation of an idea which damages Australian poetry, depreciates Australian prose, and hinders Lawson's genuine claims to greatness as a writer.

Now, from this lookout point which I have adopted—the perception, the appreciation and the cultivation of poetic values—what is to be found in current poetry in Australia today? I think that, first

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of all, we find a surprising and increasing nucleus of contemporary writers of poetry whose work in every way upholds and does honour to those values. It would be idle to mention them all now—I think of such writers as Robert FitzGerald, Douglas Stewart, Kenneth MacKenzie, Harley Matthews, Clive Turnbull, Ronald McCuaig, John Quinn, David Campbell, Paul Hasluck, Ian Mudie, Flexmore Hudson, Rex Ingamells, Rosemary Dobson and a number of others.

Because I was a war correspondent for four years, some people have asked me whether I think this war has produced the Australian war-poetry which they evidently consider it should. But what war has ever really produced war-poetry as such? Can we name any war-poem—and by war-poem I do not mean poems such as “The Charge of the Light Brigade” or Rupert Brooke’s idealistic sonnets—can we name any war-poem which has a permanent place in English literature?

The great poems have been inspired by such everyday and unwar-like things as rainbows, field mice and the cries of birds. How many have been written to bazookas or wump-guns? Is it fair, therefore, to expect some abnormal rush of good poetry merely because nations are fighting each other?

Today, as I suppose in any period of unrest, a great number of our old ideas of life and thought and expression are being assailed. That is inevitable, and I think healthy. There is confusion, too, and there has always been confusion. But none of the Australian writers I have just mentioned denies or discredits the foundations on which English poetry—you may call it traditional poetry, if you wish—has been so gloriously established.

They have developed from these foundations, it is true. They have sometimes developed in a manner which may have seemed incomprehensible fifty or even fifteen years ago. But their work defends and vindicates and asserts again the same principles of beauty, of rhythm, of integrity, and of the English tongue, which have moved English poets from Chaucer to Flecker, and from Keats to Yeats.

Hard work is one of those principles—and any school of writing or of any other art which pretends to have found a means of bypassing the necessity for damned hard labour and long thought on the part of the artist is a false one. I am glad to find any school or movement established in Australian writing which, however strange its technical machinery may appear, stands firmly on the fundamentals I have mentioned.

One contemporary Australian school appears to favour a return to the language and imagery of Australian black men. It would, in

my personal view, be as reasonable to suggest that an Australian painter should restrict himself to carving kangaroos on the walls of caves—or that, to lead a truly Australian life, we should take up our abode in bark huts and paint our legs with clay.

Yet, if these writers keep their honesty and sincerity, and refuse to betray the faith in which English poets have worked, according to their own lights, since English poetry began, I would emphatically refuse to condemn them.

The attack on our values does not come from sources such as this. The insidious campaign against our minds, against our integrity, against our self-respect as civilised human beings, comes from far deadlier and baser quarters. I do not wish to labour this point, or to insult the intelligence of this audience, by dwelling too long on the catalogue of degradation to which Australian readers and writers and artists have been subjected even within the last six months.

I feel I can mention the case of Mr. Max Harris, for whose ideas and methods of expressing them I haven't the faintest sympathy. I think his views on poetry are entirely misguided. That is my personal privilege, and it is the privilege of anyone else to think that his views are entirely right. But my indignation and sense of revulsion were just as great as those of any of Mr. Harris's warmest admirers when I read the news that Mr. Harris had been fined in a police court for what a police magistrate considered an indecent publication.

The kind of literary censorship which depends upon the views of magistrates or the sensitive aesthetics of policemen is always wrong. It is melancholy to see courts, policemen and legal processes invoked by a fanatical minority to settle points of taste in this manner.

In Sydney, we had the equally nauseating spectacle of an earnest and hard-working painter called upon to dissect the processes of artistic creation in the witness-box. On another occasion, the police force was called in to settle the qualms of another minority when a landscape was exhibited at a recent art show in Sydney. Several authors of my acquaintance have been forced to submit to moral censorship by linotype operators, printers, compositors and booksellers as the price of having their books published. That is the kind of attack on values, by ignorance, prejudice or fanatical intolerance, which constitutes the greatest danger to Australian literature and art today.

It is against this increasing enemy that bodies such as the English Association should stand—and I am glad to think that most of them do. I must congratulate this Association on the anniversary of its long and splendid history which is celebrated tonight. The English

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Association has been, and can be, a force which will defend the beauty and truth of the English tongue against all those who endeavour to degrade and dishonour them. Its value to literature in Australia will always be tremendous—for, in a paraphrase of Walt Whitman, to have great writers, we must have great readers too.

LUBRA

She, bearer of the dilly bags,
Bent low, accounted least;
A soul within a tenement
That had the bones for feast.

Compelled apart what time the boy
By torture was made man
Who lately clung upon her neck
Or troubled to her ran.

She saw her child die as she moved
Upon the weary way,
And keened on the ironic wind
That comes at close of day.

That pressure in the breast called "woe",
Made all the night aware;
The mia mia floor her wailing place,
The dry grass in her hair.

In savage, and in civilised
Is motherhood a sigh:
The earliest home of human soul
Was its immortal eye.

Unlettered, last of moving tribes,
And inarticulate;
Flawed, marred, arrested, still she bears
The precious ultimate.

"E."

CONFLICT

By MARJORIE ROBERTSON

There were white butterflies—cabbage moths—small frail things that looked as though they had been born only for the day—fluttering about the garden. The sun had turned the sea beyond the sloping green of the lawns into a molten pool blinding to the eyes and had drained the colour even from the trees and flowers . . . Sydney heat, humid and heavy, with the ferry chugging by on its way to the wharf and the white butterflies fluttering through the flowers, the only animate things.

The ferry and the sea and the butterflies blurred mistily together as Ellen winked her eyes to hold back the tears. James talked on and on, had talked now for nearly half an hour, until she felt like a criminal being arraigned by a stern cold judge. She felt, well, really, what she felt at the present moment was just as though those wretched little white butterflies were fluttering through her mind. Not a comfortable state, not rational, no room for them, really no room at all, my dear. You see, it's already occupied. I just can't imagine where I could accommodate another person, not even another baby, and as for butterflies, well, really, my dear, James and I didn't take butterflies into account when we planned our marriage. How could we, dear, no one ever suggested . . . I suppose if they come, we'll just have to pretend they're very welcome, but we didn't expect . . . And what a shock for James! He won't like it. I can tell you that now. He won't like it at all. You see, James doesn't like to attract attention; there's something low he thinks about things that attract too much attention. And anyhow, he'll say I don't know how to look after them; he'll feel they're his butterflies and must be cared for as he thinks fit. Oh God, I'm going to make a fool of myself and cry. . . . And she turned and almost ran from the verandah into the room beyond, into its coolness and shade. If she did cry there, perhaps the tears would drip down unnoticed; perhaps James wouldn't see them; perhaps she could catch them with her tongue, like a lizard, and scoop them in.

"It's not as though I hadn't explained again and again, my dear Ellen, what I consider my responsibility, my duty." James had followed her into the room and his long bony fingers were carefully filling his pipe, tucking in all the thread-like bits that dripped over the sides, running over like her tears, and being carefully scooped in. She watched his fingers and knew the set of his long mouth as he spoke; knew the hard cool grey of his eyes. This was when he had himself under control, knew he had himself under control, stood by and

admired his firmness and coolness. Master of himself and master in his own house. The corners of his mouth pulled down in that funny half-smile of the man confessing to himself what a fine fellow he was, what clear vision, what logic. My dear chap, what you need with women and children is a firm hand—a firm hand and a little tact. I think I can say, my dear chap, one way and another, I think I can say I usually get things as I want them in my home. Yes, I think I might say that. Look at me now, two years married—and a beautiful woman, my dear chap, oh yes, a beautiful woman. But, my God, she needed handling! And he smiled with hard complacency.

"It's no use, Ellen, standing there like a spoilt child and pretending you're going to cry. It's no use at all. You know quite well—how often have I told you?—tears, feminine tears, don't worry me at all. The boy, after all, is my son and I'm responsible for his upbringing. Last night, now, you were half an hour late . . . and again this morning. It won't do, Ellen, it won't do at all. There'll have to be . . ."

He's going to replace me. I'm being sacked, like Daisy. "Really, Daisy, I've spoken for the last time. Either you do your work properly or else . . ." She giggled softly deep in her mind and wiggled her bottom as Daisy used to do when she was being corrected—such a provocative little bottom Daisy had had. If James had been different he would have noticed just how provocative. But when she had mentioned it to him, just casually, just in passing, he had looked quite shocked. "Really, my dear Ellen, you forget—Daisy is in my employ." Just as though, being employed by him, Daisy lost her body.

The tears started again. That was what she had done—being employed by him she had lost her body; but not in the same way as Daisy. Daisy became non-existent physically, while she had become just his other physical self, to be directed and ordered and regulated as he directed and ordered and regulated his own existence. Pull yourself together, Ellen, this won't do. After all, the baby is yours. And she went on talking to herself in her own mind. If you don't make a stand now against this . . . well, tyranny was the only word for it . . . against this tyranny, you won't have a mind left. You might just as well take your notice with a good grace, my girl, and not ask for a reference. Don't dream of asking for a reference. Think what it would mean to be refused. But there, James was going on and on and she not listening. God, he'll realise you're not listening, and then you'll be in for it. Strange how she slipped into the idiom of Daisy whenever James heckled her.

"... regularity . . . that's what I'm keen on for him. If you start the child with regular habits, he'll grow into that way of life. Really, Ellen, I must repeat you're no longer a child, and this irresponsibility . . . it makes me apprehensive, not only for you but for the child. Mother was saying only the other day, she . . ." James stopped to light his pipe and his mouth softened and his eyes filled with that curious look of bland reverence they always had when he spoke of his mother. And that, said Ellen to herself, is the last straw. I'll stand anything else, but not his mother, not now.

"James, you make yourself ridiculous, fussing like an old woman. The child, our child mark you, won't suffer through being kept waiting half an hour. If no woman keeps him waiting longer than that in his life, he'll be lucky. I'm not a machine . . . switch the button, my dear, it's marvellous, you just switch the button and it works . . . at six o'clock, at ten o'clock, at two . . ."

James put his pipe carefully in the ashtray, paused to brush flecks of ash from the arm of the chair, and, with a deliberate sigh, walked across the room towards Ellen. How unreasonable women were. Didn't she realise that at times like this he almost disliked her? Those silly irrelevant dodgings of the feminine mind. Who, he'd like to know, ever mentioned machines? His eyes grew colder and harder and his mouth was a tighter, an almost cruel, line. Making an issue of it, was she? Another magnificent quarrel, that's what she wanted, did she? And who'd suffer in the long run, that's what he'd like to know. Himself, of course, his whole day disrupted. But not this time. And he leant coolly against the back of a chair, while Ellen turned towards the wall, standing straight, rigid, her cheek pressed against the cool cream of the wallpaper.

"No one, my dear Ellen, ever mentioned machines until you . . ."

"Say what you'd like to say, James. Go on, why don't you. Don't be nervous. Don't think I'd mind. Say you'd like to try someone else. Like to see if they could make a better job of it. Go on, say it. Tell me just what your mother would have done. . . ." Ellen stood now with her back against the wall and faced him, the colour dyeing her cheeks, her eyes hard and brilliant, the tears drying.

"Ellen, Ellen, Jessie'll hear you! She's only in the bedroom . . . I can hear her there. You mustn't let her hear you . . . have a little more control. Now, I, my dear, can say what I think without becoming hysterical, without . . ." He broke off. Perhaps that wasn't the best way. "How do you think a man likes to start his day like this? How do you think he likes to leave his home like this? What are you trying to do? I just point out, reasonably enough"—his mouth

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schooled itself into reasonable lines and his eyes to the patient impatience that is so much worse than anger, so much more cutting than the whip of temper—"what the boy should be having. Why, you only have to read those books to realise how important. . . . If I didn't know you better, I might almost think . . ."

"Know me better! You don't know me at all, that's the trouble. To you, I am a machine . . . something to be run to your pattern of life . . . even when it comes to the baby . . . do this, do that . . . be this, be that . . . but never myself, James . . . it's not me you know, not me you want. . . ." James took her slim shoulders in his hands and pressed her against the wall. "Stop it, Ellen. You're only making me angry, trying to work me up. Making a scene. . . ."

Ellen stood there, his hands on her shoulders, trembling, angry, panting a little. Conflict that must go on for ever; her mind trembled with the weariness of it; never to be able to get one idea from her mind to his; never to be able to joke with him, not even to toy with the idea of being a kind of electrical milking machine for his son.

Looking at her, holding her with his strong bony hands hard on her shoulders, sinking into the soft flesh, his light grey eyes darkened. He felt his cold logical reason slipping away from him and he hated her for it. This was what she did to him, what she could still do to him. This was what she made of him. But at the back of his mind was a cold triumph; this was one way in which he could always bring her to heel, one remedy that never had failed. Let her know his need of her, let her know the emotion she could stir in him, and she came very meekly to heel. His hands slipped down her shoulders, down her back, until his arms were tightly clasped round her waist, biting into the soft flesh, her body pressed against his, held there. Even as her body resisted, fought for freedom as a slave to break its chains, her mind clouded, went away from her, becoming dim and uncertain. Not this time, please God, not this time. Let me be strong enough to hold him back, to finish this one argument, to reach some finality. Not this time, or I hate myself for ever. His mouth, hard and cruel, was down fast on hers. But she stood rigid and her mind cleared, cleared and became cool and sharp and bitterly amused.

She saw the sunlight creep in a golden band of light across the room, lightening its dim coolness, until she could see the little blue veins running across James's closed eyelids, see the almost anguish in his face, and still be cool and untouched. This was a freedom she hadn't known before; a freedom that carried its own bitterness, its own hurt; to give in had always been so easy. In letting him triumph each time she had won for herself a temporary peace.

From the verandah, breaking into both their minds, came the lusty yelling of young James. James loosened his grip on Ellen and she pressed him away, away from her, and ran with that silly tottering little run of hers—why couldn't she be calm, be dignified?—out on to the verandah. She threw back the nets from the cot and took the baby in her arms, rubbing her face against his, murmuring funny little meaningless jerks of sound. He stopped crying and his eyes blinked slowly in the sunlight and his small fat hands grasped at her hair, at her cheek, at her neck.

James walked to the doorway and stood there watching them, his pipe again in his hands, his fingers pressing down the tobacco, pressing and pressing it. His eyes were cool and watchful again, assessing her, assessing the whole picture. In complete absorption, in complete forgetfulness of everything but the baby, Ellen laughed her low chuckling laugh and the baby chuckled at her, and dark eyes looked into dark eyes, both of them laughing, both of them young, both of them unconscious of him.

He took out his watch and flicked it open. "It's ten past ten, Ellen. I think you'd better . . ." She wasn't listening, didn't even look towards him. He stuffed his pipe into his pocket and dislike grew in his eyes. "Well, you've managed to keep me late. I hope you're glad of that. I hope that satisfies you. But even if you have nothing to do . . . even if time means nothing to you . . . someone in this family must work; someone must see that the wheels go round. I . . ." And he stood there snapping his watch open and shut, open and shut.

"Yes, you'd better go; you really had better go." And she smiled a cold little smile over her shoulder, a stiff little smile to the man in the doorway. It didn't quite reach as far as the doorway. It dropped somewhere on the wooden boards between them. She noticed that; noticed it, but had no inclination to pick it up and give it to him. She didn't want to look at him, was afraid to look, afraid that in this new-born detachment she might see him too clearly.

James hurried across the verandah and down the steps and walked quickly across the lawn, his head flung back, his mouth grim. All he did was to keep them both; all he did was to make life easy for them. Ellen had walked to the top of the steps and he could hear her voice following him like some soft echo. "Little lovely one, blinking in the sun . . . darling one with his hungry mouth . . ." He didn't look back at them. The words weren't meant for him to hear; they were just something between the two of them, those two on the top of the

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steps. He pulled open the heavy wooden gate and heard it slam shut behind him, heard it still quivering as he hurried down the road.

Ellen stood on the top of the steps, rocking backwards and forwards with the baby in her arms and she watched him as he crossed the lawn. There were no tears in her eyes now and she went on murmuring to the baby, soft twisty endearments, but her eyes were sad, and bitter little lines ran down from nose to mouth. So this was what could happen to something that once had meant so much, to what she had thought would mean so much, companionship and a closeness to each other . . .

She watched him turn the corner of the road and still stood rocking on the steps. The sea was no longer a molten pool, but blue now, a deeper blue than the wide sweep of sky above. White butterflies were still fluttering among the flowers, like little ghosts, Ellen thought, little ghosts at play. Everything except this warm living moving scrap of flesh, this small fat hand grasping with uncertain fingers at her neck, had a ghost-like quality, everything except this was faded.

SONG

Oh to be abroad
When the day whitens,
When the land lightens
To its gradual grey;
I would watch in the dark dew
When the hill brightens
With so sweet delay.

Oh I must be going down
Where the mists hide me,
Where the calls guide me
Down the plover's way;
There I would gather and store
Joy to provide me
For the coming day.

JAMES DEVANEY.

A McCRAE!

The reviewer of *Australian Poetry, 1943* in *The Bulletin* for November 15, 1944, threw up his hands at the inclusion of Hugh McCrae's "Gentleman's Song to his Servant" and when he had got them down again explained that he disapproved because McCrae "has not, as Yeats did, kept his poetry alive and moving".

I have it on the best authority that "Gentleman's Song" belongs to the period of *The Ship of Heaven*, a musical fantasy (in which it could well have found a place), produced by Doris Fitton at the Independent Theatre in 1933. The song is therefore not representative of McCrae's present writing, and presumably was made eligible for *Australian Poetry, 1943* by its recent publication in *The Home*.

The demand that a poet, even though increasing in years, should continue to develop is, however, not a fair one. Yeats was able to do so with the assistance of Voronoff, but Yeats should hardly be considered to have set a precedent which other poets must follow. Yet McCrae *has* "kept his poetry alive and moving": a progressive change almost up to the present moment may be discerned in it. The newer contents of *Poems, 1939*, revealed that the rich sensuousness of *Satyrs and Sunlight, 1928*, had given place to something lighter, freer and clearer—"our skipping-musick fine", as McCrae now calls it. This is exemplified most notably in "The Mimshi Maiden", but also in such verbal delicacies as "Camden Magpie" and trolling catches like "So the Week Goes".

Since 1939, humour, wit, fancy and symbolism have predominated, in McCrae's work, over sensuousness. The result sometimes is that the full meaning of a poem eludes one at first reading, though the fresh charm of the verse impresses itself. An example is the title-piece of his new collection, *Voice of the Forest*:

O happy, happy bird,
Who lies the leaves among
To hear the river sing
The song his mate had sung
When she was blithe and young—
The song that she had learned
From one she could not see;
A voice without a form,
That ran from tree to tree.

The song of life and joy,
Untouched by grief or pain . . .

In answer to critics who had failed to discover intellectual content in his poetry McCrae writes:

Why should I philosophize?
Being happy I am wise;

and again:

Why should I hypocritize?
Now I've sown my early seed,
Even love I hardly need . . .
Free from milk of Alma Mater,
Friended by the great Creator,
Through his fingers glad to run
Among the flowers in the sun
All my day; and then, at e'en
Die for joy that I have been.

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Such verse is not the product of technique but the natural ebullient expression of the man, and though some poeticisms are retained ("e'en") it differs considerably, I feel, from the earlier:

I blow my pipes, the glad birds sing, . . .
I am the lord,
I am the lord,
I am the lord of everything!

We can find, in *Voice of the Forest*, some new devices of expression, such as the use of unfamiliar words with force or beauty ("hypocritize", "nidor"), or that dainty trick, paralleled in Skelton, of adding a "y" to a rhyme-word:

It makes me so drunk,
I'd kiss a she-monkey.

(Compare

Sat lyke a seynty,
And began to paynty,
As though she would faynty.

in "Elynour Rummyng".) In melody, as well, some novelty will be seen:

Pretty pittosporum,
Drowsy with nidor;
Haunt of the wasp, or em-
broidering spider.

The wild bees drink
In forests of Pan
Where birds all day
Say *chip-chip chay* . . .

There are fine phrases too, such as "drowsy with nidor", "lullaby-anodyne".

some, up-curved,
Stung silent in the martyr's blaze :

and

Seeing th' adulterous sail,
Athwart the night
Towards Asia bent,
Touch heaven to a flame
Where Helen came:

Where Helen went.

I have deliberately left out of account here a number of gay or lovely songs and lyrical passages from the unpublished *Ship of Heaven*, concentrating on more recent poems in *Voice of the Forest*. If we ask whether McCrae has any topical comments to make in verse, we shall find the answer in some epigrams on world figures and events. I quote "One Who Shall be Nameless":

O Death, where is thy sting?
This is that dastard king,
On profitless parole,
Who could not save his soul:
And so he saved his skin

To wrap dishonour in.

The remainder of *Voice of the Forest* consists of personal lyrics and verses (the best of which is "The Secret (W.M.)"), descriptive pieces and humorous colloquial ballads such as "History" and "Camden Cricket-Match".

When *Voice of the Forest*, soon to be published by Angus and Robertson, appears, it will show McCrae at his maturest and most characteristic, holding a fine and even tension between life and poetry.

R.G.H.

THE NIGHT WAS MADE FOR LOVING

Love, fingering now my watchful heart,
Before you stab, before you screw,
Before you fan the bushfire spark,
Know: the night is not for you.

I would not have you think I fear
Your weariness, your misery,
But strike your flag at sunset, or
Cross no sword at all with me.

In the long daylight harsh with pain
All things shift, all things flow,
The sharp black shadows melt and run,
The tired mind lets the world go.

These hours are yours—play out your game,
Confusion on confusion makes
No killing weight, and little's lost
The second time the heart breaks.

But waking in the friendly dusk—
All things calm, all things plain—
From day's bad dreams and fever chills
The soul a while is healed again.

When moving where the starlight breathes
Through pale blown grass, through silver air,
The Holy Feet grow cold with dews,
My happy tears may warm them there.

Though in that glaring other world
I eat your bread, I pay your price,
You shall not with your burning sword
Thrust me out of Paradise.

NAN McDONALD.

WRITER AND READER

POET OF TIME AND THE WATERS

One Hundred Poems. By Kenneth Slessor. (Angus and Robertson Ltd. Sydney, 1944. 3s. 6d.)

Even the most universal poets have their dominant notes, which over and again sound with unmistakable emphasis, at times perhaps to the point of disharmony, in the chord of their verse. No poet is entirely impartial to his themes: that which is most peculiarly his own will assert itself no matter what, for such is the man's imaginative essence. One of the diversions of criticism is to seek out the dominant notes in an author's early poems and trace their development in work of later years.

Between the end of the first world war and beginning of the second, Kenneth Slessor published three main volumes of verse, which have now been republished together by Angus and Robertson. *Earth Visitors* (1926) was much more than a first book of promise; it clearly revealed several aspects of a talent already mature, sometimes brilliant, and never approaching the commonplace. (Of how few first volumes could that be said!) Here are some typical lines. Mr. Slessor writes of "Heine in Paris":

Now in this winter snow,
In the black winds from Russia, and the printed mane of night,
Heine looked out, and gazed at the world below,
Thick with old chemicals, breaking far out of sight
With ageless tides of man—ah, granite flow,
Eternal, changeless flux of humanity,
Undying darkness and light!

He creates, in language rich and strong, scenes of Kublai Khan, the friends of Lao-Tzu, gods who walked the earth in days gone by, and inmates of a roisterous "thieves' kitchen". Here also are lines on music, and "Realities"—perhaps the best poem in this book—dedicated to the etchings of Norman Lindsay, two rather Swinburnian lines from which exemplify the purely musical quality of some of Mr. Slessor's writing:

And mouths that have never spoken, ears that have never heard,
Eyes that have never seen, speak now, and hear, and see.

It is significant that in these poems Time, and "water stumbling over the stones in silence", and mangroves drinking "timeless pools" have already made their appearance.

The years 1927-1932 are covered by the second book, *Cuckooz Contrey*, containing forty-five pieces amazing in variety as in craftsmanship. There are verses of the sea and seafarers, on country towns, an "Elegy in a Botanic Gardens", a picture of the torments of Gulliver "Lashed with a hundred ropes of nerve and bone", Jackey Jackey the bushranger. Reading and re-reading them, we come to several conclusions: Mr. Slessor is not a narrative poet or a dramatic poet; further, he is never a didactic poet, in any form. An Australian poet he is, but without a trace of Australianism, that malady of which were to sicken so many of our poets from 1939 onwards. Above all, Kenneth Slessor is the reflective poet, distilling from observed and remembered reality an essential record that is at once true to our own experience, powerful, and moving. Persons do not act within these poems in the fullness of their being,

but are seen transformed by the poet's imagination. The "Five Visions of Captain Cook" are precisely that—visions. The great seaman speaks not a word, but how clearly is he visualized at a remove, through the beholder's eye! This is not to imply that the poet lacks dramatic ability, which ability is testified to by "The Man of Sentiment" (in *Earth Visitors*), two dialogues between Laurence Sterne and Catherine de Fromantel and Catherine and her mother. But this is an isolated example of dramatic writing. For Mr. Slessor, it appears, what ultimately count and draw from him his most perfect expression are the image and the essence of time and place. It is just these factors that go to the making of "Waters", one of the finest poems of the first two volumes of his published work. And here again, in the waters of the Harbour and the vision of life passing out of the present, are the twin notes on which Mr. Slessor's most profound poetry is based:

This Water, like a sky that no one uses,
Air turned to stone, ridden by stars and birds
No longer, but with clouds of crystal swimming,
I'll not forget, nor men can lose, though words
Dissolve with music, gradually dimming.

All this will last, but I who gaze must go
On water stranger and less clear, and melt
With flesh away; and stars that I have felt,
And loved, shall shine for eyes I do not know.

It is a measure of the poet's accomplishment that he can take simple subjects treated by numberless poets before him, and from them make poetry forcibly impressed with his own individuality.

In 1939 appeared a minute volume entitled *Five Bells*, containing, presumably, those poems written after 1932 which Mr. Slessor saw fit to preserve. The size, however, of this book, which was decorated by Norman Lindsay and published by Frank Johnson, Sydney, is in no fitting proportion to the contents. Its twenty poems include "Sleep" and "To the Poetry of Hugh McCrae", two big poems (not long) which would give permanent value to any volume. But more important are the superb sonnet sequence "Out of Time" and the title-poem "Five Bells", which, as it were, crown Mr. Slessor's first twenty years of poetry.

It is by no accident that both these works treat of the sea and of transformation wrought in Time. Here in fact the recurrent notes expand into chord, then to phrase and movement. These two themes which Slessor has made his own now form the beginning and end of the poetry.

The sonnets open with the following quatrain:

I saw Time flowing like the hundred yachts
That fly behind the daylight, foxed with air;
Or piercing, like the quince-bright, bitter slats
Of sun gone thrusting under Harbour's hair.

Time takes the poet, drills him, drives through bone and vein, but must eventually move on, leaving the lovely moment at its back:

I and the moment laugh, and let him go,
Leaning against his golden undertow.

In the final sonnet the poet attains to a poignant and even majestic realization:

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Leaning against the golden undertow,
Backward, I saw the birds begin to climb
With bodies hailstone-clear, and shadows flow,
Fixed in a sweet meniscus, out of Time,

The moment's world, it was; and I was part,
Fleshless and ageless, changeless and made free.
"Fool, would you leave this country?" cried my heart,
But I was taken by the suck of sea.

Note the effect in the first line of the abrupt "yachts". The musical quality of the lines quoted above from "Realities" is here deliberately or instinctively avoided. The poet sees Time flowing, so we are made to visualize the hundred yachts, whose image is far more telling than purely verbal description could be.

It remains to speak of "Five Bells", a poem worthy of detailed analysis—which may it receive from hands more expert than mine! The poem "Waters", already mentioned, is built up on contemplation of the Harbour by night; and in "Out of Time" we have the poet's fullest statement on change in Time, his second "dominant note". "Five Bells" represents a further step along the road of Slessor's poetic development, wherein are fused with others the two themes on which, it appears, all his ardour has at last been concentrated.

Between a round of bells on the Harbour, the poet lives again the life of a friend "gone from earth, Gone even from the meaning of a name". He sees again the past which they have shared, his musing punctuated thrice by five bells from the dark warship riding below.

Where have you gone? The tide is over you,
The turn of midnight water's over you,
As Time is over you, and mystery,
And memory, the flood that does not flow.

The poet looks out of his window in the dark and tries to hear Joe's voice,

but all I heard
Was a boat's whistle, and the scraping squeal
Of seabirds' voices far away, and bells,
Five bells. Five bells coldly ringing out.

Five Bells.

The three poems I have briefly touched on are masterpieces of Australian literature. There are many other aspects of Slessor and his methods that remain to be dealt with—his humour, the suavity and wit of some of the lighter verse, the startling use of unexpected words that jerk a line into life, and so on. But where Time and the Waters have urged him, he has written his finest poetry, in that here are to be found his most universal subjects and most impressive imagery.

A period of six years separates the second volume from the first, and seven years lie between second and third. May we then hope for Volume Four in 1945? One looks forward to it with eager expectancy, wondering to what symphonic proportions the two notes might by then have been expanded.

R. H. MORRISON.

VIRGIL

Virgil. By F. J. H. Letters, M.A. (Set up and printed at St. Vincent's Boys' Home, Westmead, N.S.W., 1943. Author.)

Probably most lovers of the classics would rather read Homer than Virgil, but this is not to the latter's detriment. When it is remembered that even the laborious Alexandrians were undecided as to the meaning of quite a number of Homeric words it becomes obvious that Homer worked on a diction not only ripe, but in some respects over-ripe. It is doubtful whether Homer himself knew the meaning of, for instance, *Tritogeneia*. Such epithets, coming from a remote antiquity, had become not merely hieratic, but also hieroglyphic. They embody early strata which must have left only faint traces even in Homer's day. He did not create an epic diction. His merit is to have used it better than any other of the great gleemen of Greece. Virgil's case is far different. Latin literature in the grand style began only about the time of the Punic wars. Virgil's achievement therefore is little less than miraculous. He may well be regarded as the greatest master of words the world has seen.

Thus Mr. Letters has begun his treatise fittingly with comments on the Saturnian measure, Naevius and Ennius. This serves to put Virgil in his earlier setting. Later, his relations with Lucretius and Catullus are discussed, the preliminaries thus being set for filling in the portrait. This was necessary, for Virgil exemplifies the paradox that genius is a whole greater than its parts. He is the grand metaboliser, the white soul, *anima candida*, in which the spectrum of his predecessors meets to be transfigured. Of himself he says:

iuvat ire iugis qua nulla priorum
Castalium molli devertitur orbita clivo.

Georgics, III, 292.

But this claim to originality is not that of a conscious stylist or a novelty hunter, rather of one who ventures half-timorously, half-gallantly on new domains. Virgil would have fully agreed with C. S. Lewis: "The attempt to be oneself often brings out only the more conscious and superficial parts of a man's mind."* The influences which acted on Virgil were not a whirlpool that absorbed him; on the contrary, he absorbed them. He was not an imitator, but a glorifier, not so much a man as a Blakean "state". To regard him as an adapter is gross misconstruction. Virgil never tried to be himself; he could not help being himself, and that alone is originality.

Mr. Letters is a man of wide reading and meditative mind, and he has developed this view much more completely and powerfully than the above rough sketch might indicate. As his treatise is short he has plied a broad brush in his depiction, but the breadth is not shallow. Beneath the outlines there are hints of discriminating scholarship which he has wisely not obtruded on the reader.

What are these broad outlines? They present us with the picture of the ardent young northern Italian reared amid landscapes and atmospheres which only Italy can offer to the eye, fully in love with the farming folk and the farming life which was the real core of the Roman spirit.

At first, in the true vein of youth, he was charmed with its idyllic air, and naturally enough wandered through green pastures wielding Theocritus's crook. Yet he is not Theocritus, nor is he really artificial. Mr. Letters over-emphasises, perhaps, the artificial element in the Eclogues. Classic bucolics are very different from Sidney's *Arcadia*, or the delightful interludes in *Don*

* *Preface to "Paradise Lost"*, p. 3.

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Quixote. They sprang from something more native, a point brought out in masterly style by Andrew Lang, who paints a Theocritus reminiscent of Scott, the collector and immortaliser of fugitive snatches, ballads, and legends. Whatever Virgil took from Theocritus was kneaded into his own young experience of rural delight; but whereas Theocritus worked on a finished diction, Virgil had to make his own style, and of this it may be said, that the Latin language would not have been thought capable of such finesse and lustre had the Eclogues not been written. This does not infer, however, that a Dresden china delicacy is not present, and Mr. Letters's remarks on the artificiality, particularly the masque-element, are distinctly suggestive.

The next picture is that of the poet who has left idyllic dalliance for the practical labour of the countryside. In short, Virgil has become national-pastoral. He has seen the evils of the mercenary soldier, and now seeks to re-create the stout farmer-stock, which Horace never ceases to praise, and which furnished the enduring strength of Roman armies. This has been ably handled by Mr. Letters, and I shall not labour it.

The final picture changes from the national-pastoral to the national-ideal of the Aeneid. Here opens an immense field which a treatise of a hundred odd pages cannot hope to cover. But Mr. Letters has given the main picture faithfully and ably, and has added many original and penetrative comments. The Dido incident, for instance, is most skilfully handled. There are many suggestive thoughts, of which the following is a good example. After explaining that Virgil is not without sympathy with the Italian aboriginals who, after all, "were not aggressors, and have all the pathetic interest belonging to the heroes of a hopeless cause", he gives in the following words the justification of Aeneas's triumph: "Could the singer of the plough, the wheatfield, and the vine, have felt their charm too dearly won in exchange for the shaggy forests of aboriginal Italy?" That sentence contains the ethic of *pacisque imponere morem*. It was Rome's destiny to do for the mind of Europe what it did for her swamps and wildwoods.

Even those blest with the faculty of rapid reading will not find Mr. Letters's style easily assimilable. Possibly he is a little too *curiosus* in seeking precision of phrase and closeness of logic. This gives the impression not so much of laboured diction as of over-compressed thought; not so much of obscurity as of incomplete lucidity, and that is not a distinction without a difference. But Mr. Letters is a poet of quality and he has studied Virgil with a poet's affinity. His images are various, rich, and apt, and quick to capture the fine shade. In a discussion, for instance, of the relations between science and poetry he says: "With him [Lucretius] the cold abstractions of philosophy kindle to impassioned themes. The *Rerum Natura*, that remote aboriginal force, draws near and takes visible form in its creation of fire and hail, forest and flower, until it almost becomes a theophany, and the atheist poet a Hebrew prophet. From the clang of atom-hammer on atom-anvil is wrought an affinity of sparkling wonders, all seen in the marvellous glow of their new birth." That is a most poetic rendering of the cosmic stithy; and in the main thought Mr. Letters has struck the truth of Wordsworth's dictum: "If the labours of men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the poet will sleep then no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself." Vitality true; and the twentieth century has not turned poetry into prose, but science into mysticism.

Fault-finding is not congenial when the board has been well spread, yet one or two demurs must be recorded. At times Mr. Letters has departed from the broad outline, not with advantage to the effect. The comparisons with Lucretius and Catullus diverge into unnecessary detail, for though excellent in themselves, they distract the eye from the main figure. The treatment of the sixth book is disappointing. Its sublimity is diminished by minute examination of what might have been relegated to an excursus. Such recondite points, as *soma*, *eidolon*, and *psyche*, not to mention the vexatious *quisque suos patimur Manes*, have been so ably handled by Norden in his discussion of the probable relations between Virgil and Posidonius, that Mr. Letters seems to have added nothing of real value. Much better, for the total effect, would it have been if the abiding impression of that magnificent *nekuia* were a vision of Virgil in the solemn penumbra of Hades, or the aura of the *largior aether*.

Little harm, however, is done to the general character of a penetrative treatise. If the author reaps his full reward, he will send the reader to the original, for all great writers are untranslatable. No doubt, Australia's growing importance in the Pacific will open up new cultural avenues, but nothing will alter the fact that Western civilisation rests unalterably on Greece and Rome. Would that more Australians realised that truth as Mr. Letters has done!

L. H. ALLEN.

FROM BEETHOVEN TO BRIGHTON ROCK

Arna, the Journal of the Faculty of Arts, University of Sydney. 1944.

Within 48 pages the editors of *Arna*, 1944 have presented a varied assortment of articles and verse—with typography in keeping with the general high quality of the contents. Messrs. A. J. Baker, W. Maidment and John Rybak are to be congratulated. There are faults—most of the essays are too fragmentary, though knowledgeably based, and there is the usual sprinkling of undergraduatish verse bearing strange pseudonyms; but by and large *Arna* is a creditable production for the middle (?) of a War.

In a pretentious introduction to the Enjoyment of Music a writer claims that in Australia "a disproportionate enthusiasm . . . is concentrated almost exclusively on Beethoven". There are, he tells us, "refinements of musical experience prior to Romanticism and its aftermath, that in intrinsic merit, if not in appeal, match or outstrip anything produced within the period". His is not so much a criticism of Beethoven as a "plea for a wider perspective". A neat point—if it had to be made at all. H.H. doubtless is an enthusiastic member of a local gramophone society.

The *beyond poetry* strivings of the later Eliot are discussed by John Garrett in an intelligent appraisal of *Four Quartets*, and again an analogy with Beethoven's music is made. The organised movement of the four poems, however, makes the title of quartets denote more than the stock analogy of music with poetry. Perhaps (as Delmore Schwartz has suggested) "late quartets" would be still more exact, for as in those of Beethoven, the movement from part to part goes from a passage lyrical, quick, joyous, exalted, to a passage suddenly slow, turned in upon itself by variation or repetition of the same thought, hovering over divided parts of the same symbol or idea; harsh, flat, discursive, tortuous; and then once more quickened to certainty, difficult conviction, and the explicit declaration and direct chant of belief.

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This exploration of the technical analogies between poetry and music is a fascinating subject. *Four Quartets* (the very title immediately suggests a musical structure, reminiscent of Conrad Aiken's *Preludes* or John Gould Fletcher's *Elegies* or *Symphonies*) are by intention and accomplishment musical poems. Eliot himself has explained what he means by a musical poem. In *The Music of Poetry* (an essay that could well have served as an introduction to this book), he says it is quite common for "a poem, or a passage of a poem, to realise itself first as a particular rhythm before it reaches expression in words". But of course it makes all the difference whether the tunes employed be those of Mallarmé or Eliot, Shaw Neilson or R. D. FitzGerald (in his early poems, which alone contain *poetry*).

As Mr. Garrett says, "some knowledge of Dante's *Divine Comedy* is essential to real enjoyment of the late Eliot. . . ." Surely, more than a little knowledge is required. And he goes on to mention that a study is also needed of mediaeval symbolism, neo-Thomist philosophy, Sören Kierkegaard, Barth, Buber; and he could have mentioned Saint John of the Cross and Dame Juliana of Norwich, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Bhagavad-Gita, Heraclitus and much else, for Eliot quotes lavishly from many and varied sources. So what? you may well ask. The average writer and reader of poetry hasn't the faintest idea of what it is all about. However, we must surely be grateful for the modified sestina, the Dantesque interview, and the organised movement of the poems. In *Four Quartets* Eliot again shows that he is more original and inventive in rhythm than any other poet in English.

Perhaps the best essay is that dealing with Rochester, "the wicked earl", by "Strephon"; but this reviewer could not do justice to such a stimulating subject without having his comments as mutilated by the printer-censor as was the *Arna* article. The point is well taken that although Rochester *did* write a mass of outrageously pornographic verse, much bawdy writings of the period were falsely attributed to him. And some of the satires and songs by this seventeenth-century moralist and rake are among the best in the language.

A keenly sympathetic character-sketch by J. R. Rowland dealing with the boarders at "Deakin House", Canberra, "Psycho-analysis and Conformity", by M. D. Riseley ("The adjustment which psycho-analysis aims to achieve is an internal balance or coherence of activities")—and then the verse. A mixed bag, with "Long Vacation", by J. R. Rowland, "The Three Tasters", by H. F. Stewart, and "Le Coucher du Soleil Romantique", by A. D. Hope, holding most appeal. In Poets' Pub, Hope pukes on the bar-room floor, bawls "Time please, gents!" and drools a lament to the Last Romantic:

But it's all over now, gents, the guilt is off the ginger-bread;

It's time to tidy up a bit; it's time to shut the door

—which is reminiscent of Louis MacNeice's "Bagpipe Music":

The glass is falling hour by hour, the glass will fall for ever;

But if you break the bloody glass you won't hold up the weather.

Outside the Pantheon, Spenglerian night sets in!

J. D. B. Miller submits that Graham Greene's books deserve wider appreciation. I should not have thought so. And to drag in comparisons with Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Joyce and Forster, as he does, is fantastic. Certainly Greene is concerned, as are those giants, with the cleavage between Good and Evil on the one hand and Right and Wrong on the other; but how superbly they treat *their* material.

Mr. Miller points out that Greene is a Roman Catholic (Richard Church calls him a "militant member"). Perhaps that will explain a great deal. Greene

seemingly believes profoundly in the doctrine of original sin. The slaying of the primal father by his sons is regarded as a symbolic act which hangs like the Ancient Mariner's albatross round the neck of every succeeding generation. But human nature was created good and may finally be redeemed by grace. That is the theme which recurs throughout his books. "God gets His man."

Greene is certainly brilliant, technically at any rate. He shows an amazing gift for inventing new incidents and placing them against new backgrounds. But my 'quarrel' is that basically his writing is pathological. He is an ersatz novelist, an effete with a tendency to the abyss. The modern novelist has to do a more vital job before he can claim our serious attention. Except for Greene's sketches of childhood, his novels and "entertainments" reveal a powerful streak of morbidity. This nightmarish Greenland is peopled by perverts, prostitutes, paranoids, paraphrenics. The lecherous, lying, drink-sodden priest (*The Power and the Glory*), the depraved boy murderer (*Brighton Rock*), the sex-starved gunman with a hare-lip (*A Gun for Sale*), the perverted Etonian (*Journey Without Maps*), the masquerading Harrovian cad (*England Made Me*), the masochist, the sadist, the impotent athlete, the deliberate use of the religious *frisson*, the Major ordering whores by telephone ("a pig in a poke") . . . what a degenerate collection of humanity! In most of Greene's writing one is reminded of the terrible sexual perversion and utter brutality of Chase's *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*.

But perhaps Greene is not altogether responsible for the spiritual climate of his tragic, vulgar Greenland: he has been conditioned by the times. His books have a quality of seeming not to have been written so much as dreamed by a logical but starkly mad intellectual, and no doubt life today in wartime Europe has something of the quality of a Kafka-esque nightmare. The unique excitement of the Greene thriller is not merely in the "entertainment" of murder, horror and mystery, but quite as much in the remarkable impact of the drama of tragic motives, and its penetrating inquiry into the larger plot of the modern fate. As hinted at in Mr. Miller's article, Greene's characters are caught between Dream and Doom—the eternal dream of grace, and the doom of an evil, murderous world, a world that smells to high heaven.

It is a pity that *Arna* comes out once a year only.

C. B. CHRISTESSEN.

CORKSCREWS AND SLEDGEHAMMERS

Number Two, 1944. Verse by A. D. Hope, Harry Hooton and O. M. Somerville. (Harry Hooton, Cremorne.)

Cadmus: The Poet and the World. By Victor Purcell. (Melbourne University Press, 1944.)

Bores, so Aldous Huxley says in *Crome Yellow*, are of two varieties—those that turn corkscrew-wise and those that flatten like a sledgehammer. In the first variety I class "Guile, Hope and Hoetry" in *Number Two, 1944* of a nameless little pamphlet, founded, so we are told, by Garry Lyle.

As Galileo is reputed to have said: "It's all in the length of the pendulum." (See "Rainbow Cake", by Hope.)

Mr. Hope's contributions are by far the best in the pamphlet. "Massacre of The Innocents—after Cornelis van Haarlem", deserves its pride of place on the front page, and others, particularly "Meditation Music", are well worth publishing. Mr. Hope is ill-advised to keep the company he does, however. Indeed, after his *Meanjin* article of last year, he might well have let this "Harris

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business" drop. To harp on it, as he appears to do, is to suggest that his interest is more than literary and critical. And a very large part of the effect of this pamphlet, even if it was not any part of the intention of the writers, and I would find that hard to believe, is to keep the Harris broth stirring. One's attitude to this sort of thing depends on the age of the perpetrators, of course, but Messrs. Hope, Hooton and Somerville are not so very young. It's about time they were their age.

Of Mr. Hooton's share I prefer to say as little as possible—simply that he caricatures Max Harris's style in *The Vegetative Eye* quite cleverly, and that he thoroughly bores one in the process.

Mr. Somerville's verse is weak on the syntactical side at times, but he has one or two good things to say and he is free from any direct pre-occupation with the Penguins, though even his studies of Sydney depravity owe not a little to the birds of Adelaide.

This pamphlet has tickled the fancy of many, I've no doubt, and raised a laugh. But really, gents, this won't "clean up the bar". If poetry matters, this sort of thing ought to stop. It would be quite all right in a properly founded national poetic tradition, but as things are with us, it would be better not to publish.

Mr. Purcell, author of *Cadmus*, is a bore of another variety. His philosophical poem is a soporific.

He touches some themes which, personally, I find very interesting, particularly "the poet's world"—referred to in the author's introduction, and developed poetically in the first Canto. This conception has certain affinities with the philosophy of Santayana, to whose doctrine of the nature of poetry I subscribe. I am thus very sympathetically inclined to what is in reality Mr. Purcell's underlying theme. However it is apparent that he has not thought out his philosophical position at all well, as within a dozen lines of his introduction he subscribes, apparently, to the Platonic doctrine of essences and the materialistic doctrine of Santayana. In a philosophic poem—in some at least it may be true—philosophy may be no more than a device, but surely if a man is to write a philosophic poem he ought to avoid any unnecessary embarrassment to his logic.

Technically, the work is a *tour de force*. Though the cumulative effect of it is, as I have said, soporific, taken in small doses, one can find delight in several passages altogether charming, and towards the close of the poem there is some very spirited writing.

The Greek echoes of Canto II are good, and, coming when they do, after the wearisome development of the evolution of life on the planet, they afford the reader some genuine refreshment.

In his introduction the author refers to his long "scientific" digression in Canto II as "an attempt to show that science is not incompatible with poetry". He says, further, speaking of this same section and of the historical sections which follow in Canto III—"if it reads like a lively compression of a textbook then the effect aimed at will have been achieved". Neither aim has been achieved in our opinion. As to whether science is, or is not, compatible with poetry, we may perhaps prefer to keep an open mind. I can recall no thoroughly successful demonstration of it, I confess, though Noyes comes infinitely nearer to it in parts of *The Torch-bearers*, than our author in *Cadmus*. As to the attempt at "lively compression", as of a textbook—there is hardly a line of poetry in the whole of it.

We are told that "The narrative sections throughout the poem are written in rhymed couplets. The economy in enjambment and the continuity of upbeat is intended to convey the even gradualness and perhaps the inevitability of the historical process, while the rises and cadences of the story itself brings out in the vicissitudes of nature the rhythmic quality of existence." I very much doubt if all this was really a conscious intention at the time of writing. If it was, then an explanation is to hand of the lack of poetic enthusiasm in the writing. But surely this is merely a particularly unhappy rationalization? Generic Form does not emerge in this way, in any case.

We have called the work a *tour de force*: it is no less. We must admire the architectonics of the whole, the persistent building of the verse structure throughout the prehistoric and historical résumés. It is perhaps pointless to quibble at omissions in these sections, though we think that in a short résumé of literature through the ages there ought to be no occasion for the reader to baulk. We query the omission of Virgil and, in English drama, of Ben Jonson; and coming to the Victorian Age, or later, we query the importance and, as a matter of fact, the aptness of description of:

One single poet of a high degree
Sung in the sterile tones of tragedy.

Who is this gentleman?

The most continuously sustained writing of good standard, is to be found towards the end of Canto 6: from the passage beginning (p. 124),

Simplicity and rest have gone from us,

to the end of Canto 7.

Our ultimate criticism of the poem is that it shows lack of poetic taste. However can a man write such lines as:

Obscuring the basic agricultural fact

or

Poets and life were losing all connection. ?

No amount of technical ability, and there is much of it, can compensate for this sort of thing. We cannot understand the publisher's reader passing such lines. Lack of taste, too, is the probable explanation of the dulness of so much of the writing. No one properly sensitive to what he was doing could have perpetrated some of the passages to be found in the book. It is a further proof of the capital difficulty of philosophical poetry today. That it can be done, there is Bridges' *Testament* to witness, and in the category of dramatic philosophizing, there are, for instance, some of the longer speeches of Maxwell Anderson's *Winter set*—but such writing is rare. Mr. Purcell has not achieved it and his judgment is in question for ever having proposed it.

DONOVAN CLARKE.

IN THE MARGINS OF MEANJIN PAPERS

Meanjin Papers: A Literary Quarterly. Edited by C. B. Christesen. Autumn, Winter, and Summer, 1944. (The Meanjin Press, Brisbane. 3s. each.)

The Autumn, 1944, number of *Meanjin Papers* begins the third volume of what I have in all honesty so far considered the best of the Australian literary journals. Mr. C. B. Christesen is to be congratulated on the job he has done, and is doing, for Australian literary culture.

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The get-up of the Autumn number of *Meanjin* shows some distinct improvements. The type is better, and the appearance is improved by a new aboriginal cover design by Roy Dalgarno, who also supplies a fine chalk drawing of an aboriginal girl, nicely reproduced. The table of contents is improved by classification. It reveals a well-balanced collection of poems, articles, reviews, correspondence and short story. The reviews are uniformly good, and A. D. Hope's criticism of Max Harris's epoch-shattering novel *The Vegetative Eye* is full of unmalicious fun-poking. It should be read with the criticisms of the same work in the Autumn *Angry Penguins* by Mr. Harris's satellites, Geoffrey Dutton, Erik Schwimmer, and Sidney Nolan, who are obviously straining to reconcile their not-over-pernickety sense of literary propriety with the claims of discipleship.

The rest of the prose in *Meanjin*—if we except Ken Levis's short story "The Kid", which is a good specimen of the predominant manner of the day as seen, for example, in the work of Gavin Casey—does not seem to me to be quite suited to a professedly literary quarterly. The writers are too much preoccupied with sociological and political problems, and their offerings would be more at home in some of the more technical publications.

Of the seventeen poets represented, five are from overseas: Alex Comfort, of England, F. R. (or is it Professor R. S.?—see p. 63) Scott of Canada, and Karl Shapiro, Clifford Gessler, and Harry Roskolenko, of America. Pearl Buck, among the prose contributors, is also, of course, a foreigner. The Editor admits deliberate policy in throwing open his pages so freely to writers from outside Australia. He aims "to strengthen cultural links" and claims to be "performing a national service". I disagree. If he were, the service would remain largely political. But, seriously, how can a few lines from a few people, mostly riding hobby-horses, cement relations between countries of millions of inhabitants, nearly all of whom have never heard of *Meanjin* and wouldn't care if they had? There are plenty of oversea magazines for oversea writers, but precious few for Australian. I should imagine that the best editorial policy would be directed to the development of original work by Australians.

Of the poetry generally, let me say at once that I find it too negative, depressing, nostalgic, pessimistic, uninspiring. Realism still clings tenaciously to the Muse's skirts, not only in *Meanjin* but in the whole field of modern poetry. Poets will never see the clear sky and its wonders while they keep their eyes to the earth. They will never make anybody else see anything unless they focus the poetic vision to clarity and meaning. The esoteric pretence must, and will eventually, be broken down. Even here there are gossellers of hope and apostles of cheerfulness. Peter Middleton is such a one. I think his "The Cripple" the best poem in the number. Its simplicity, clarity, and directness appeal to my unregenerate taste. It is translucent with spiritual light and buoyant with a spirit that touches the soul:

The lovely youths go by
Their happiness throbs upon my heart like music?

Douglas Stewart, in "As the Crow Flies", handles a light subject in his usual competent manner. Mr. Scott's "Recovery" is another quite intelligible effort, a little allegory in verse, done with wartime effects, and vibrant with a rare optimism. Brian Vrepon's "The Challenge", on the other hand, is an indictment of life and the human institutions, bitter and despairing. It is marked by a rugged strength and vigour, but Mr. Vrepon, with undoubted poetic gifts, should remember that the greatest poetry never despairs. It transcends. Mr. Comfort, in "Epitaph" and "For Ruth", defies the homeliness promised by his

name and is macabrely creepy with a mass of vague images in which familiar ingredients like bodies, pebbles, water, corn and meadows appear and reappear. Of the three U.S. writers (I ignore accepted reputations, you will notice), Karl Shapiro, in "The Puritan", shows his undoubted facility with words and image-creation, but the theme is an unmotivated resurrection and we've almost forgotten in these days what a billycock hat is. Clifford Gessler's little "Papaya Tree" is a cheerful, thankful and graceful tribute to tropical nature. Harry Roskolenko has a sorrow he is unable to express clearly in "End Voyage":

... twenty-eight in a gray freighter's tomb

Enmeshed no longer in some warring fortitude,
They have retired to a completer attitude.

The younger generation is represented in *Meanjin* by Barrie J. Reid and Laurence Collinson. They combine a compelling zeal and a rather audacious precocity with some true feeling for words and images, but they should not be tempted to over-write; fluency should not be mistaken for inspiration.

H. L. McLOSKEY.

Propagandists can do a great deal with a name, but it takes something more than a propagandist to bring a thing into being by naming it, no matter how earnestly and often that is done. Commenting on the poetry of Mr. Ian Mudie (*Meanjin*, Winter), Mr. A. D. Hope remarks that culture is not produced by writing *about* it. But *Meanjin* writes about it, taking as an object of cultural activity what should actually be a condition of the very existence of that activity.

Meanjin, however, is adding to its stature. In the fields of criticism, and of a certain philosophical-psychological comment on semi-literary topics, which borders on sociology, there is much that is thoughtful and provocative; and on the side of original composition there is at least no falling-off. This section is stronger in poetry than in prose, though not so much stronger as the proportion of one to the other might suggest. Robert Peel (*Meanjin*, Winter) and Hargis Westerfield (in the Summer number) are Americans whose poems, at their best, are distinguished by freshness and lucidity of diction. To describe one as an afternoon landscape and the other as a night as sea is not to do justice to the real subject of each, but the unhindered communication of atmosphere is their main achievement. It encourages a belief that the Americans are rediscovering the English language. By contrast, most of the other poets give the impression of trying too hard. The poetry is best when it is simplest. We know, of course, that this simplicity can cost more in blood and sweat than a whole pageful of curious language, but it is the completed work that is to be judged; and, whatever the object of *Meanjin* poets might be, it is to my mind a defect in them that most of the diction gives the impression of having been striven for. Words are overworked, too. "Nostalgic" has been a favourite for many years. Present *Meanjin* writers lean heavily on "lewd". The strivings of Judith Wright and Geoffrey Dutton are perhaps less evident than some. Peter Hopegood strikes a different note. Perhaps in him we have an Australian who really is sardonic.

The Winter *Meanjin* has a survey by J. P. McKinney of the evolutionary process of the spirit with special reference to T. S. Eliot, and E. J. Stormon surveys the evolutionary process of T. S. Eliot's spirit in the light of his latest publications. The Summer *Meanjin* promises a discussion on Personalism, but

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Mr. Len Fox's sturdy refusal to have anything to do with the subject leaves the field to Professor Boyce Gibson, who has already, perhaps, said most of what there is to be said. Winter contains a great deal of mutual goodwill and face-saving over the Ern Malley affair, which does credit as much to the writers' hearts as to their understandings.

Meanjin is at its weakest when evangelising. White-hot enthusiasm in a good cause is a respectable thing, but prone to its own peculiar errors, in particular to the error against the scientific spirit, of ignoring what does not fit, and making rather too much of what does. And there is something else, which may be only carelessness of expression. For instance, Mr. Colin Badger, in quest of a national idea, strikes out this thought: "Politically and socially, we still lack boldness and initiative . . . taking our faltering steps forward only when others lead." Students of Australian history, political and social, must pause here, if only at the word "still". But perhaps Mr. Badger does not mean "still". Perhaps he means "now", "at present"? If so, his statement, though it may be false, at least does not assume a falsehood.

KATHLEEN BARNES.

SHORT CUTS

Coast to Coast: Australian Stories, 1943. Selected by Frank Dalby Davison. (Angus and Robertson, 1944. 7s. 6d.)

A Girl with Red Hair. By Douglas Stewart. (Angus and Robertson, 1944. 7s. 6d.)

Potch and Colour. By Katharine Susannah Prichard. (Angus and Robertson, 1944.)

Despite its apparent ease, the short story is the most treacherous of literary forms. The novelist has time and space in which to develop character and situation; the poet enjoys the crutch of a formal discipline to help him walk upright. The short story writer has neither advantage, and yet must produce effects allied to those of both poet and novelist; he must invest his subject, within a brief space, with a more than quotidian urgency, and he must tell something like a story at the same time. Few authors succeed consistently—success is more common in the longer examples, where the long story fades into the short novel—and the number of short stories which possess interest enough to repay the trouble of writing them—or of reading them—is correspondingly small. Too often one's only response is a rather wistful "So what?"

Stories which avoid this neutral state of indifference do so by means as varied and unpredictable as the significant experiences of life itself. Of the *Coast to Coast* selection, Margaret Trist's "Else's Third Baby" succeeds chiefly by the sardonic, blank objectivity of its contemplation of the philoprogenitive sluttishness which is its subject. Personally, I find this story the most satisfactory in the book. Not only is it beautifully made—so much of a piece throughout that no one passage can be lifted out for quotation for fear of spoiling—but because one can read it with laughter, or with tears, or with an angry sense of moral exasperation and social outrage, or with the author's own non-committal blankness, and still find it completely coherent and, like Else herself, wholly uninterested in anybody's opinion of it. Alan Marshall, in "Trees Can Speak", produces one of those stories which seem to mean so much without

revealing any overt meaning at all. This effect is usually gained by perfection of pattern, and here the combination of two asymmetries (the man who cannot walk and the man who will not speak) seems to invest the story with just the required balance and significance. P. W. Cowan, in "Temporary Job", constructs a mood, of both personality and setting, by a careful and powerful command over detail; and Hal Porter, in "At Aunt Sophia's", uses his verbal cleverness and his sensitivity to momentary visual impressions to play fascinatingly with the kaleidoscopic memories of a day which is not what it was. And there are others which could be mentioned.

Some stories, striving to escape the limbo of nothingness, do so by reactions so violent that the cure is worse than the disease. The outstanding example here is "Sputum Sam", a medical story whose unreal realism and fake toughness arouse in me only exasperation and distaste. Not far behind is "The Surrealist", which wraps up the tenuous intellectualization of adolescence in a jargon both tiresome and pretentious. From no author will I accept "bubbliab" or "ludibry" or "intercitizen" (p. 46). In general, one is left with the impression that Mr. Davison's selection is not quite so impeccable as the principles laid down in his excellent foreword; and one observes the permanence of the bush and its life as the matrix of the best Australian short stories. Is it inevitable that those with a city background should always seem slightly provincial?

The title-story, which opens Douglas Stewart's volume, seems to me a failure from start to finish, conceived in banality and executed with carelessness, but one should not be discouraged by it, for thereafter one meets a gourmet's assortment of pleasures. Mr. Stewart is a poet, and therefore master of words; he is a New Zealander, and knows well his small-town backgrounds, which he views with a lively and vivid gaze; and above all he is human, and understands people. This understanding is not limited, as with so many authors, to one type, or a few types, of character; from Fat Hilda to Mr. Bishop is no niggardly gamut. His stories combine a rich humanity (and often a rich humour) with a delicate power of phrase. The sense of lyrical absurdity which clings to the earlier hours of the morning, for instance, is deliciously caught in this picture:

On the topmost pinnacle of the monkey-puzzle tree at 13 Mortimer Street, high above the ghost of Sergeant Piggott, a black-bird welcomed the morning. The sunlight clapped its hands in the back bedroom and the sleepers stirred.

It would be hard to begin a day—or a story—better than this. And for economy of means combined with wealth of effect, commend me to the story called "Stan". To reveal the essence of four non-static characters, and to tell a fishing story at the same time, all within seven pages, is a little triumph. My own taste inclines to Mr. Stewart's lighter moods, and I hand the official bouquet to "Carnival". In some of the more serious stories (as in "The Medium" and the title-piece) the author tends to overcrowd his canvas and to skimp his analysis; but there are plenty of stories free from this fault, and those of more solemn taste may prefer, for instance, "The People were Different"—the end of which is especially good—or the wholly successful "Give us This Day".

The stories in *Potch and Colour* differ from those of the other two books in being less consciously constructed as "literature". They are, as the authoress remarks in her foreword, "yarns that have been told to me, for the most part in the mining districts and wheat-growing areas of Western Australia . . . they are folk-lore, really". Miss Prichard is content almost to let the yarns tell themselves, and they meander quietly along the devious and unemphatic route taken by the bush-track. There is no attempt, for instance, in most of the stories, to build up a climax, so that where a climax does come (as in the closing remark of "Genieve") its arrival is the more effective for being unexpected. But this method

of making a short story, like others, has its perils; here the tendency is towards the monotonous sameness not unknown on some bush-tracks. It is particularly noticeable in the mining yarns, nearly all of which turn on the point of "luck"—whether A, or B, did, or did not, die at the moment when gold, or water, was, or was not, discovered. This leisurely method of yarning seems to have affected, sometimes, Miss Prichard's English; from a writer of her distinction one does not expect a floating participle (p. 147) or a singular subject with a plural verb (p. 7) or the use of "anticipate" in the sense of "expect" (p. 88). Some of the more elaborate stories (e.g. "Marlene" and "Christmas-Tree") stray into the field of sociology; and if Miss Prichard has not Lawson's skill at making the social subserve the human problem, there is never any doubt as to the intensity of her sympathy for the dispossessed, or her ability to communicate it. The book certainly breathes the true air of the bush; but perhaps a mere cit may be permitted to wonder whether fact, unadorned or only scantily clad, is ever stranger than a piece of unashamed fiction.

S. MUSGROVE.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Fourteen Minutes: Short Sketches of Australian Poets and their Work, from Harpur to the Present Day, Based on Wireless Talks Delivered for the A.B.C. in 1942, by H. M. Green. (Angus and Robertson Limited, 1944.)

Shaw Neilson, by James Devaney. (Angus and Robertson Limited, 1944.)

Angry Penguins, edited by Max Harris and John Reed. December, 1944

Ern Malley and the "Angry Penguins", Being a Review of the Greatest Hoax in Australia's Literary History, and the Subsequent Indecency Trial. (W. Hornadge, Lismore, 1944. 9d.)

Harvest, by William Hart-Smith. *Pacific Moon*, by Peter Miles. *Progress to Denial*, by Colin Thiele. (Jindyworobak Publications, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1945.)

Forests of Pan: A Selection of Poems Not Hitherto Reprinted from Hugh McCrae's Satyrs and Sunlight, 1928. Made by R. G. Howarth. (The Meanjin Press, Brisbane, 1944; Angus and Robertson. 4s. 6d.)

A Companion to "Speaking Personally" (Walter Murdoch), With an Appendix on the Essay in Australia. By Colin Roderick, M.A., M.Ed.; *The Australian Novel (A Historical Anthology)*, arranged by the same. (William Browns and Co. Ltd., Sydney, 1945.)

Interim, edited by A. Wilber Stevens and Elizabeth Dewey Stevens. (Number Three, Winter, 1945. Seattle, U.S.A.)

Australian New Writing, edited by Katharine Susannah Prichard, Bernard Smith, Ken Levis and George Farwell. Number Three, February, 1945. (Current Book Distributors, Sydney. 1s.)

THE AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1944

One pleasing feature of the Annual Report of the Association's activities for 1944 is the healthier financial condition apparent.

This, of course, is very largely due to the relief from the expense of publishing *Southerly*, a responsibility assumed for a period of two years by Angus and Robertson. While the Association gains in this way, the magazine itself also benefits, for a much wider circulation than formerly has accrued and it holds its own in open competition with magazines of a similar nature.

We hope that Angus and Robertson's confidence in its literary merit and its usefulness in its own particular sphere will not be misplaced.

The Association has had, on the whole, a successful year which was fittingly brought to close with the celebration, at the Annual Dinner, of the twenty-first anniversary of its foundation.

The dinner was one of the most successful in recent years, being attended by more than ninety guests. The President of the Association, Emeritus Professor E. R. Holme, presided and, after proposing the toast of the King, welcomed the guest of the evening, His Excellency the Governor, Lord Wakehurst, who had accepted the office of Patron-in-Chief of the Association.

His Excellency, in reply, spoke of the work of the Association and the wide field open to it and to the study of literature in general.

"Australian Literature" was proposed by His Honour Mr. Justice Nicholas and replied to by Mr. Kenneth Slessor.

The membership during the year was maintained and it is hoped that with its record of twenty-one years of achievement behind it, the Association will go on to greater success; the Committee, therefore, once more urges members to do what they can to obtain new members.

The enrolment is less than it should be in a city like Sydney. However, at this time, when everything that means anything is in the melting-pot, when all that the arts and literature stand for is being debased, and when tradition counts for nought, an Association such as ours has a responsibility not to be measured in mere numbers of members.

At the last Annual General Meeting a motion was tabled by Miss Ruth Bedford suggesting that the name of the Association be changed to "The English Association, Sydney Branch".

After discussion the motion was carried, but it was decided to submit the proposal to the members as a whole for an expression of opinion, and the consequent voting resulted in a majority for the change.

The matter was further debated at a special meeting on the 26th July, and circulars epitomizing the arguments for and against the proposal were submitted to members.

The resulting voting was again a majority for the motion. It was decided, however, that the change of name should not take effect until the beginning of 1945.

Afternoon meetings were continued during the year, and the Committee desires to thank the Board of Management of the Rural Bank for the use of their Conference Hall on these occasions.

SOUTHERLY

At the request of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, a committee was formed to confer with the Commission on questions of pronunciation, especially of Australian place names. The members elected were: Professor E. R. Holme (Chairman), Dr. Mitchell, Mr. H. L. McLoskey, Miss H. M. Symonds, Mr. J. J. Hardie.

The following addresses were given during the year:

April: "The Future of Australian Literature", Mr. George Farwell.

May: "Must Australian Become a Separate Language?", Mr. Bartlett Adamson.

June: "The Teacher in Literature", Mr. G. A. Cantello.

July: Special meeting to debate Miss Ruth Bedford's motion—That the name of the Association be changed to "The English Association, Sydney Branch".

August: "Parson Barnes and his Poetry", Mr. Peter Assheton.

September: "Gertrude Stein", Miss Vere Hole; "James T. Farrell", Mr. W. Maidment.

October: "William Gosse Hay, Our Greatest Romantic Novelist", Miss F. Earle Hooper.

November: Annual Dinner.

H. M. BUTTERLEY,
Honorary Secretary.

NOTES

"*Southerly*" Fund.—A donation by Miss Lucy Dunster to publication funds is here acknowledged with thanks.

J. A. R. McKellar.—"The Gleaming Cohort" and "Newts", referred to as poems in the introductory note to the memoir of J. A. R. McKellar and selections from his poetry in the last number of *Southerly*, are prose pieces, and are extant, along with another entitled "Death of a Chinaman".

"*Southerly*".—A copy of Volume 3 and a copy of Volume 4, each bound in blue cloth, are available, at 11s. 6d. a volume. Please enquire of Miss Herring at the University.

Australian English.—"It would be impossible to end this brief account of [James Hardy] Vaux without at least a mention of his labours in compiling a long and interesting vocabulary of the *canting language* as it was spoken at home and by the transported population of Sydney. From this it seems apparent that many of the common expressions of modern Australian colloquialism have developed—that at least is part of our convict heritage. The entertaining dictionary is appended to the second volume of the memoirs."—Brian Elliott, *James Hardy Vaux: A Literary Rogue in Australia*, 1944, page 28.

AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH ASSOCIATION, SYDNEY

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ending 31st December, 1944

SOUTHERLY

INCOME.			EXPENDITURE.		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
Jan. 1—			<i>Southerly</i> —		
Credit Balance	..	..	Printing Vol. 4, No. 3	22	5 6
Members' Subscriptions	£14	6 11	Purchases A. & R. Ltd.	1	4 0
<i>Southerly</i> Subscriptions	6	8 0	Editorial Expenses	3	8 9
"	£16	18 1	Printing—		
"	2	2 0	Offprints	..	..
"	..	..		£1	10 0
"	..	..		17	6
"	..	..		16	6
Other Publications—					
Miscellaneous	£2	11 9	Envelopes	3	4 0
English Pronun.	12	0	Advertising Leaflets	2	5 0
Julius Caesar	7	3 0	Title Pages	1	19 5
Tempest	2	3		10	0
Pamphlets	2	8 6	Binding <i>Southerly</i> —		
Annual Dinner	£31	14 1	For Angus and Robertson	1	4 0
Other	..	..	For Association	10	0
	..	..	Administration—		
	..	..	Sales Manager—Postages, etc.	4	1 7
	..	..	Secretary	11	12 0
	..	..	Treasurer	1	3 9
			
	150	6 3	Bank Charges	16	17 4
			Refunds—	19	10
			Overpaid Angus & Robertson		
			Rent	8	0
			English Association, London—	1	5 0
			Levy		
			Exchange	8	0 0
				1	0 7
			Dinner—		
			Catering	32	16 8
			Cake	2	2 0
			Printing	2	0 2
				36	18 10
				£102	0 3
			Profit for the year £82 17s. 9d.—		
			Transferred to Commonwealth	30	0 0
			Govt. Savings Account		
			Credit Balance at Commercial	52	17 9
			Bank		
				82	17 9
				£184	18 0

Supplementary Statement
Commonwealth Government Savings Bank

	£	s.	d.	1944. Dec. 31—Credit Balance	£	s.	d.
1944.							
Jan. 1—Credit Balance	8	4	0	.. .. .	38	7	2
May 10—Transfer from Commercial Bank	10	0	0	.. .. .		
May 31—Interest .. .. .	..	3	2	.. .. .		
Aug. 9—Transfer from Commercial Bank	20	0	0	.. .. .		
	£38	7	2		£38	7	2

Audited and found correct.

T. WILLIAMS, B.Ec.

L. I. SHEPHARD, B.A. B.Ec.
Hon. Treasurer.